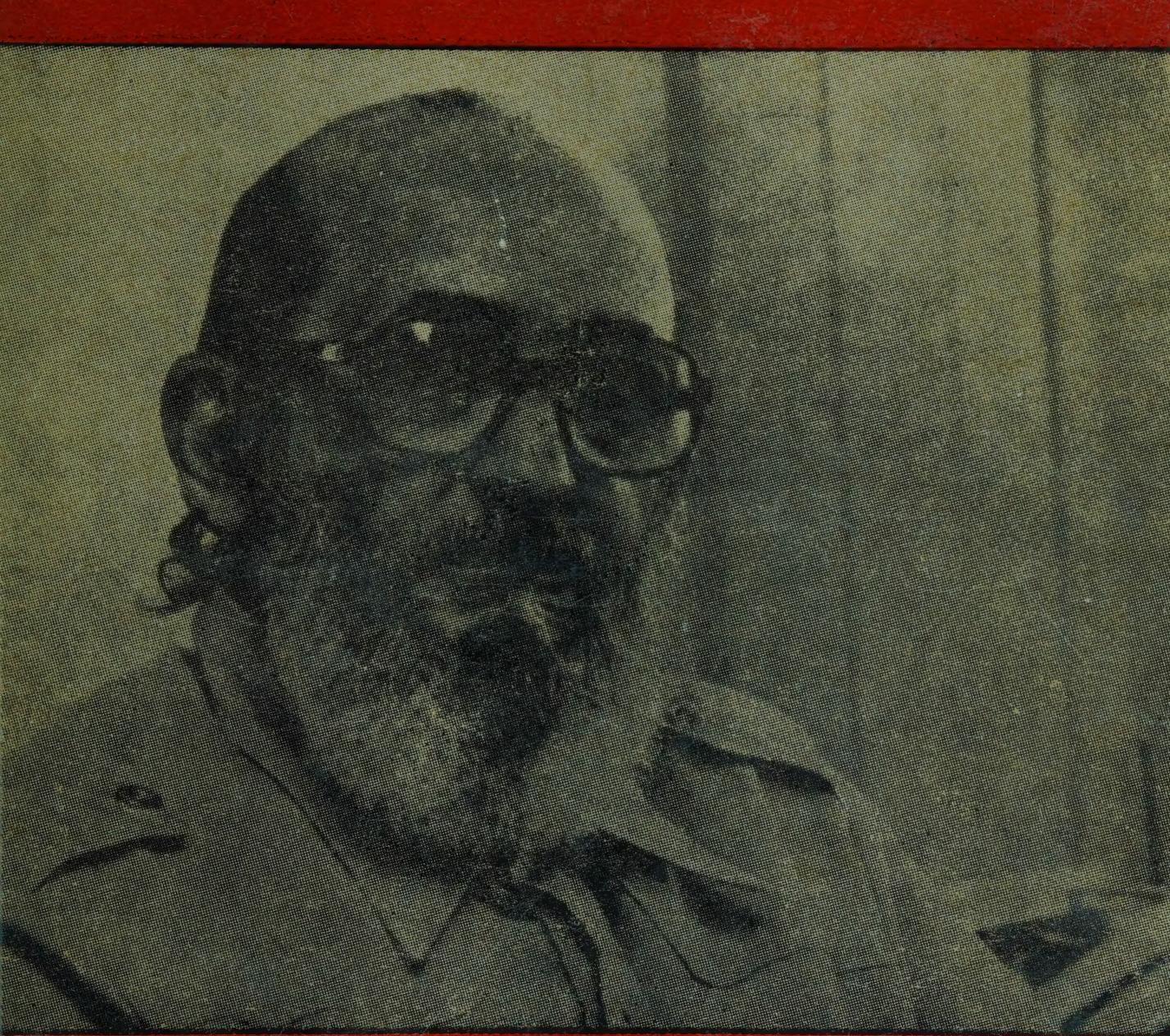
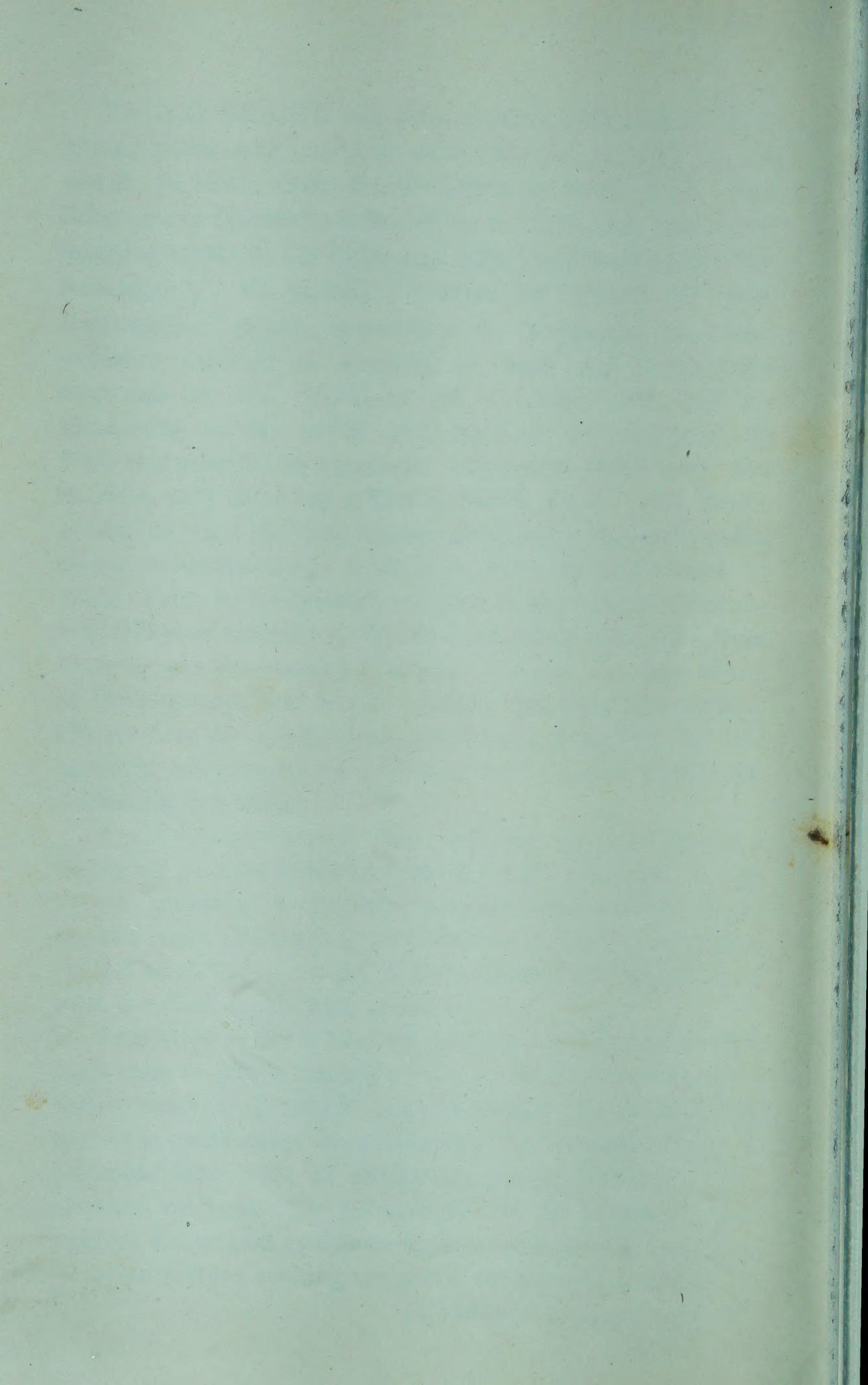


# A DAY WITH PAULO FREIRE



Edited by  
**George Mathew**



## A DAY WITH PAULO FREIRE



A DAY WITH BANGALORE

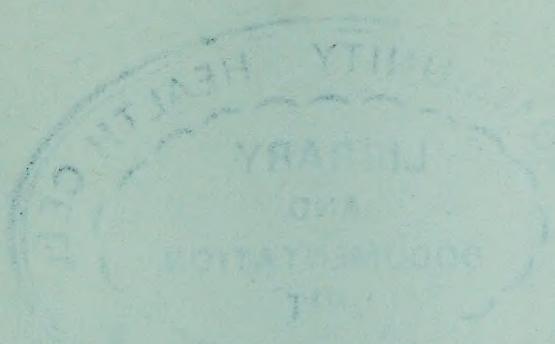
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DAY WITH PAULO FREIRE

*Edited by*

**GEORGE MATHEW**



**I.S.P.C.K., DELHI**

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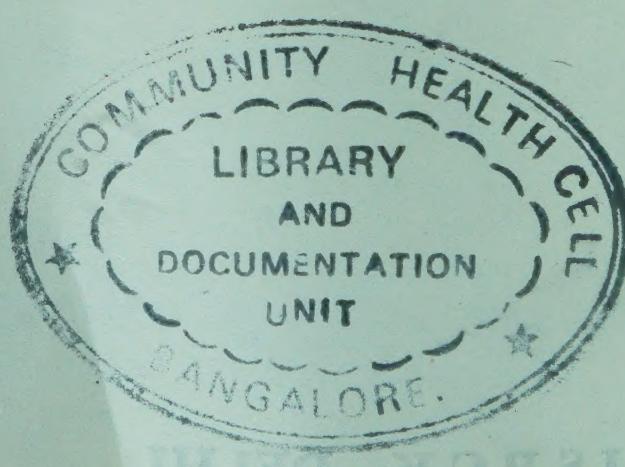
DAY WITH PRAISE & PRAIRIE

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I went to the slums of Brazil not because of Marx but because of Christ. The people in the slums told me, "Go, meet Marx." Their conditions sent me to Marx. Now I meet both, Marx and Christ, and I have no problems. I continue to do that in peace.

**Paulo Freire**

and arm to defend. You will be able to find a  
place of safety. The people who are  
here will help you to make your  
escape. They will give you  
what you need.

Very truly yours

## Editor's Note

To have spent a day with Paulo Freire, in whose hands education is 'a means by which men can perceive, interpret, criticise and finally transform the world about them', was an exciting experience for a group of people actively engaged in education for social change.

The following pages contain what has transpired at a discussion with Paulo. Issues were raised; questions were asked. These reflected the aspirations and frustrations of the participants. We have not tried to chisel the transcript to fit into any pattern. We are keeping the divergent emphases, the rawness of some of the views. The words said in the meeting have a certain force because they were expressions of experiences of persons engaged at the grassroots level in making people conscious of their rights.

Paulo listened, tried to understand our situation and responded. And what he said would have made many rethink their positions. The day was rewarding. Through the ambiguities into which we were pushed, there ran the thread of the passion for liberating people from bondage.



## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

**George Mathew**

Friends,

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you to this meeting with Paulo. Today, we have participants from all parts of the country; from Nagercoil, Bombay, Ranchi, Patna and various other parts. May I say a special word of welcome to all those friends who have spared no pains to be with us this morning. This meeting was made possible by Vishwa Yuvak Kendra and its Director, Mr. P.T. Kuriakose. He was gracious to set apart a day of Paulo's programme for a group like ours.

This meeting is being held under the auspices of the Forum for Christian Concern for People's Struggle. It may be a new association for many of you. Let me say a word about this Forum. It is an expression of the concern of some of the Christian organisations, groups and individuals for the ongoing struggle for social justice of the oppressed sections of our society. Our concern transcends caste, creed or religion.

We believe that churches must create a new image about themselves and their approach to the poor of this land.

We have with us Rev. Anand Chandu Lal, Vicar of the Cathedral Church of the Redemption, New Delhi. He is one of the Working Presidents of the Forum. Rev. George Ninan from Bombay, who is also with us today, is one of the founder members of the Forum.

Today we will have about five hours with Paulo. This is not intended as a speech making session by Paulo with the participants responding. Rather, it will be the other way round. Paulo will listen to our experiences, problems and questions and the issues arising out of them. This is an informal meeting. Kindly try to be precise so that we can make maximum use of the short time we have. We have with us Fr. Kunnunkal, together with whom I had an opportunity of contacting Paulo when he visited India in 1973. Fr. Kunnunkal will be the moderator of the session today. Before I hand over the proceedings to him, let me make an observation:

I attended the two day meeting of Paulo with social activists, which was convened by the Vishwa Yuvak Kendra. From my brief experience in his company, I could understand that he is not a specialist in adult literacy,

but that he is a politician. In other words, the question which we have to grapple with is: how education can be an instrument, a weapon in the hands of the masses for their emancipation from the oppressors and the exploiters. As a church group, we have come together with the assumption that the church has a role in this direction and that we are committed to that goal. Let me close with a sentence which Paulo said in one of the meetings. He said, "I went to the slums of Brazil not because of Marx but because of Christ. The people in the slums told me, 'go, meet Marx'. Their conditions set me to Marx. Now I meet both, Marx and Christ, and I have no problems. I continue to do that in peace."

I extend a most hearty and warm welcome to Paulo in our midst and may I request Fr. Kunnunkal to take over the proceedings.

#### **Moderator (Fr. Kunnunkal)**

Thank you, George Mathew. An opportunity like this is what we have been looking forward to. Since the group is fairly large, we would not go through a formal introduction. That will take much time. I would like to mention incidentally that our guest of the day likes to be called Paulo, rather than Professor Paulo Freire, Dr. Freire etc. He would feel at home if you

will call him Paulo.

Here are several persons who are actively engaged in the field work, specifically in conscientisation work and orientation and reorientation of people — a number of young visionaries in education and health services, young theologians with a great number of dreams and hopes about India, professors of theology, administrators, planners and people in charge of agencies that are promoting development through financial aid and so on. So we have a pretty good distribution of people here from various backgrounds to take part in this discussion or dialogue. And let me re-emphasise what George Mathew said: That we would like specifically to be a Christian group of people coming together to talk about our Christian commitment to the nation through education — education in the larger sense. In other words, we would very much keep in mind the Christian context here. What is our Christian response to this very existential situation in this country? Yesterday there was a meeting of a much more varied group where we were also present. Good discussions were there. But we have come here, and we are called here today as a Christian group.

Certainly you do not need any introduction about Paulo, because you are fairly well acqui-

ainted with him and his writings. He has provided social conscientisation in education in many parts of the world, a real awakening to people who are involved in education. And so, what we hope will happen at the end of the day will be some kind of clarification, some definitions made considering the national context, the opportunities we have and the very real difficulties that we are facing. This is the kind of formulation of strategies, plans, commitments and priorities for action in the movements that should take place. How will we engage ourselves, commit ourselves, looking at, and responding to, this situation. If you can look in that line, basically mass education, adult education, non-formal rural education, are also commitments to formal education. But with the accent perhaps heavily, as Paulo would like to put on the ordinary people, the reading is somewhat biased. So I think you don't mind if I say it is biased. How do you respond to that as Christians?

I think this should be enough by way of introduction as far as I am concerned. I would like, in the first session, to see you bringing up pointed issues. Then we can categorise some of those issues and that will become the theme for our day's work. I hope you can initially raise issues on the general topic, and then I

think we can pick them up and go a little deeper during the discussion. I would now invite any of you to set the ball rolling.

### **Santiago**

In the concluding remark made by George Mathew about Paulo, he mentioned that Paulo went to the slums of Brazil because of Christ, but the reality of the slums led him to Marx. Now by way of clarification of Christian response, particularly to the oppressed: Do we understand that Christ is no more an answer but Marx is, or is Marx a Christian too? And secondly, when we reflect on Christian response, do we reflect as members of the institutional church or as individuals, groups, baptised, confirmed, fully convinced in Christ and Christian values? Is there an opposition between the structural response and the individual response? Are we going to spend some time here to discuss these; discuss both or just the second?

### **Philip Manthara**

On that remark again: What you are asking has certain implications. Marx seems to offer the economic and political analysis and thereby offers a solution, whereas the church is unable to handle the situation. I would like to get a clarification on this. Do you mean to say that

for the economic and political problems, like slums of undeveloped and underdeveloped countries, Christ and the church had never offered a radical solution?

### **B. H. Jackayya**

Paulo says in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,<sup>1</sup> that education is either for domestication or for liberation. It seems to me that he speaks here of a dichotomy. One of my experiences in working with the students in a theological seminary and in the context of the practical work in several villages of community development, I find it difficult to understand this dichotomy. My question here is, Whether education for liberation can itself be hundred per cent successful?

### **Pradip Prabhu**

As I understand it, the whole methodology and philosophy of conscientisation<sup>2</sup> takes Marx's

1 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (Penguin, 1972), pp. 152.

2 The term 'conscientisation' refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality. See *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 15 and chapter 3.

analysis of society as the ideological ground. Also, there is the fact that our country is deeply rooted in mythology in every aspect of life. In this context, conscientisation and the process of demythologisation immediately come into conflict with traditional religion and traditional Christianity. How then does conscientisation in Paulo's sense fit into the present way that the religious organisations offer it? Secondly, can conscientisation ever be done within the formal educational structure, or are the values that are presupposed in both these measures mutually conflicting?

### **Joseph Velamkunnel**

Paulo, somewhere in your book you say that Marx scientifically described subjectivism and also in your book you implied that welfarism should be destroyed. Are you completely in favour of not having any welfare programme? I am asking this as a professional social worker. Will you alienate the professionals, in whom society has invested so much money, from the revolutionary movements? Is there a role for the professionals in such movements as adult education and conscientisation? I would also like you to link it up with Christian response. Do we have Christian professionals or should all Christians be non-professionals?

## MEANING OF CONSCIENTISATION

**Paulo**

I think we must change a little bit the development of this meeting. I feel bad when all of you begin to ask me questions. I am a common man like you and would like to talk in that manner. I will be very free to say, 'No, I don't know about that question, please !'

I did not make notes when you were asking questions, but you did I am sure. I start with the answer to the last question, about my book. I would like to ask you to read that again. Of course, sometimes I also do not quite understand on the first reading. But when I come back, I change my perception, my understanding. Therefore, I ask you to read that book again.

My intention was not to be anti-professional. When I criticised the professionals for the naivety of the so-called social work, I was not saying that the social workers had nothing to do. The question is to know whether they are clearly concerned with what they must do. They should know with whom they are, and for whom they are working and living in this world. This is absolutely necessary for the professionals. If you say you are working for humanity, it is a vague concept.

**Moderator**

Paulo, he was asking whether the welfare activities are completely ruled out.

**Paulo**

It depends. I criticised in my book what may be called 'specialism'. I don't know whether this is correct English. I mean by this something which distorts assistance. I feel this word has some kind of a connotation, some kind of reaction which leads those who receive assistance into a dependent situation. It is similar to paternalism. With the use of techniques developed by the capitalist-industrialist society, 'specialism' has come about. In my view, 'specialism' destroys the human dimension of those who are being assisted. I think what we have to do is: by trying to help others, they must be made to help themselves and not to be permanently objects of our help. But a specialist does the opposite. This is what I criticised. I hope you also won't accept that 'specialism'. *About subjectivism*: yes, I made reference to this point in my book at a certain point. I was discussing the question of subjectivity and objectivity. I was trying to clarify my position vis-a-vis both these aspects, in trying to defend subjectivity but not subjectivism. That was, for me, what Marx taught. There is no subjectivity without objec-

tivity and vice versa. There is a direct co-relation between the two, subjectivity and objectivity. They cannot be dichotomised, separated. What Marx really destroyed was subjectivism and not subjectivity. I insisted on that because some of the mechanistic Marxists, in my view, did not understand Marx well.

### **Moderator**

Some other questions were about the process of conscientisation. One was: In a traditional society, whether they are Christians, Muslims, Hindus, to what extent will the process of conscientisation succeed?

### **Pradip Prabhu**

Can I clarify my question, please? I think you got my question wrong. The process of conscientisation is essentially a process of demythologisation. Then, it is going to be in direct conflict with the organised society. Is it not?

### **Paulo**

Yes, there are certain conflicts with those in power. It is interesting to look on these questions and observations. We know the political nature of education in our society. When we talk about the political nature of education, many people say, 'No, no, it does not exist.' Doesn't this

question reveal the political aspect of education? For me, it is clear that it is ideological. Is it not true that those who have power and those who live in power exploit others with their power? Obviously, they cannot give the 'week-ends' in the tropical beaches as gifts to those who are working in order to expose the exploiting character of their position. The difference in their interest, because of their position, is stronger than their superficial affirmation about their Christian faith, if they are Christians. They are much more honest in their language as Christians — Christians by accident — and that sometimes helps them to continue to exploit. This is a fact we must respect. And, of course, they cannot give away their position, their interest and their power. They cannot. *In history, we don't find even one case of the ruling class, those who command position and power, having committed suicide.* If you know some example, please give me to put it in my book's footnote. I do not know.

Every time you begin to work with people, it is not necessary for you to be going to the people and say, 'look, have a gun, let us try to learn shooting.' No, no, no. We are only bourgeoisie, trying to teach the people how to read and write and, above all, trying to understand their own facts in which they are involved. Then we understand that those who have power and

have man-made interests defend their interests. But soon we begin to perceive that the people begin to understand that they suffer, they are hungry, they are not educated, they cannot act, they cannot sleep well, they don't have a house to sleep in. These things happen not because God wants; not because destiny establishes it, but because there is certain structure which prevents them from becoming human beings. This is what history speaks to you also. I used to say that I am in exile for 14 years not because I was teaching my people 'ba, be, bee, bo, boo' in my country. I am in exile because I was trying to teach the people to see the reality and read the reality, and not only to read and write. I am very happy in spite of missing my country and my people. Sometimes, may be next year, the chances are better to go back and see my people again and to learn again their situation.<sup>3</sup> By saying that to you, I am not telling you to stop working. No, no. On the contrary, I am telling you, please work but do not be naive: try to discover the way how to survive and how to be efficient in your work.

### **Pradip Prabhu**

In the context of what we are speaking, there

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3 The Government of Brazil gave permission to Paulo to visit the country on 3rd August 1979.

is a debate and I would like to open it to the house. There is a myth that has been created and is being perpetuated, that traditional institutions, be they in education or in health or in any other work, can also do 'conscientisation'. But as you know these institutions are there to perpetuate a particular system. And conscientisation process must necessarily subvert that system. How can they do 'conscientisation'? Any institution that is either supported or protected by the state or financially assisted by the state cannot but work for the state. So, Paulo, when you say that 'do the work and don't be naive about the work', you are asking us to walk out of these institutions. You cannot stay in these institutions and also do conscientisation.

### **Paulo**

I do not like to be orthodox from the intellectual point of view. I think we are beginning to understand this question better. You as teachers, pastors, social workers etc. have ambiguities. And our ambiguity exists to the extent that we have a different dream, depending on the model of the society in which we are. We would like to have a different kind of society, to create a different kind of social relationship. Then, at that moment, our ambiguity begins to work. It means that we have a foot here and a foot there.

That is, tactically, we are inside the system, but, strategically, we are outside the system, and we realise how difficult it is to walk like this with a foot here and a foot there. This is the ambiguity. Sometimes we have to accept this latent contradiction which develops this ambiguity. We work for some institutions, for example, which are also having their ambiguity. Traditional aspects and progressive aspects are there. It is very difficult not to perceive this kind of contradiction in many institutions. I think the question before us is to try to discover the ways by which we can recognise our ambiguity, so that we can diminish it to make it possible for us to do something.

Some people sometimes ask me, 'why are you working for the World Council of Churches?' And I say, first of all, I have nothing against the World Council of Churches. I am a man trying to become a Christian. I always say like this and I don't like to say that I am a Christian. We are not Christians. We are becoming or not becoming. I think I am very responsible in this statement. For me, even the Pope is not a Christian. We become or not become. Sometimes we are not, sometimes we are. Certainly the World Council of Churches also has the same kind of ambiguity which I also have. Nevertheless, in the WCC, I feel and see great

possibilities to work. I have all the freedom in the world in the WCC. Because of that, I have until now rejected invitations of universities in various countries to be a full time professor. I prefer to stay in the World Council of Churches. I do not see any real contradiction for me to work there. I am very, very happy. But it does not mean that all in the World Council of Churches think like me or should act like me. They also have the right not to think like me or not to appreciate my convictions. The question for me, nevertheless, is whether I can do something meaningful by working there. If not, I will discover some other way.

### Santiago

Paulo, I think it is time now, this morning, to come down more dynamically to one or two of the basic issues which have been already raised. I beg to submit with all humility, looking at the problems of the oppressed through the Christian conscientisation and Christian responsibilities, that the biggest evil that has been given birth to by the latest debate of conscientisation is what our friend has just said: that 'well, every system, every body who is working among the people, lack this, lack that, and unless we overthrow them, we cannot do anything.' I believe this is a latent but dangerous enemy of

the oppressed people. They are as dangerous as the orthodox religious, ritual-minded, mythological-minded, and as untrue as the party politicians. I believe that the religious orthodox (ritual-minded) people who touch more on the ritual part of religion and the politicians who just try to maintain power and exploit other people are on the same level. It is my personal conviction in the light of my experience of the last few years in the constructive field of development that the latent enemy is the new force which simply tells that schools, hospitals, agricultural projects, co-operatives, social departments, national organisations — all these are lacking in certain aspects within a system and hence they are enemies of the people. Now, if the Communist Party of India (Marxist) say that, I can understand. I know that party, their manifesto. I know what will happen if they come to power. If I want to vote for them, I will vote for them. If I don't want to vote for them, I won't vote. It looks to me personally that there is a conspiracy going on internationally, nationally and regionally, that somehow or other a particular system is being promoted and perhaps they are trying to infiltrate through the 'latent dangerous enemy' in the name of, I would say, 'Christian radicalism'. My point is: the people who deny the benefits

of social justice as quickly as possible to the poor people are traditionally and outwardly religious people. They would say, 'forget about it (benefits to the poor), be content with what you have; all these classes are God-made', and so on. This is purposely maintained by our party politicians. Now this is the area where hundreds and hundreds of people are engaged today by trying to find how best the benefits of development in a society, like that of our country, can be reached to the maximum number of people in the quickest possible time. Last week I had the benefit of discussing more or less the same topic as this with a group from Darjeeling. We came tentatively to the conclusion that it is neither these so-called radicals nor the politicians who are going to bring development to the people.

Now we are here. We are already exploiting someone else. We are spending time in this hall which has been made with so much money. We live in comfort when thousands of poor people in the slums go on to live without having this morning's breakfast. So we ourselves become oppressors. Anyway, we come to the conclusion that if we are Christians and responsive in a truly Christian way to the oppressed people (God's beloved people), we have to be spiritually Christian in the Indian context, religiously secular, professionally scientific and ideologically

constructive, not radical. We have to be humanely technical and we have to be apolitically political. Now, no one group can do this. Several people must attack several problems in different dimensions, but there has to be some sort of co-ordination. But I personally believe that this new force of the so-called politically oriented Christians is not going to benefit the poor.

This reminds me of the Bible. Christ said something and hundreds and thousands in the last 2,000 years have been interpreting it in different ways. Paulo, you have written a book, but when you are away in the World Council of Churches, different people discuss it in different ways and interpret in different ways. Now there is a concern on the part of hundreds and thousands of constructive minded people that perhaps the movement which is being spearheaded by some of those who go by the concept of conscientisation, join the forces of the enemies of the poor people.

### **Moderator**

May I invite some more reactions from the participants before Paulo responds?

### **Paulo**

My answers to Santiago's statements are given in my book. I have not changed even one

centimetre from there. The change I have is: I have suffered more radicalism on my part: I have become more radical. I would like to know how others here react to the analysis of Santiago.

## RADICAL CHANGE

**Pradip Prabhu**

Paulo, you said in your remarks about being naive. Perhaps the dream of being so radical as to walk out of institutions and think of building up a new society is naive. I think we need to make room for change. But change takes time.

**Paulo**

Yes, of course.

**Pradip Prabhu**

We accept people as they are and we need to work with what they have. A little while ago somebody asked you whether welfare activities are completely ruled out. I am working with people of different religions, to educate them for modernisation. It is alright in our minds to expect from them certain response which we would, perhaps, like to hear. But it does not come. We have a different mixture of what you call 'double ambiguity', and that is part of

life. We have to accept it and it is not to our liking. We have to tolerate it and from that point of view I suppose what Santiago said is also correct. That is, to think of an extreme is being naive and not practical. While our dreams ought to be of a society where there is equality and participation, we have to make room for the process of this change. And there we have to be realistic, practical and respect the people. I think one of the problems about this radical approach is that there is no respect for any body else's 'but mine'. This perhaps is the biggest danger. It destroys also the human approach to the whole problem of development and liberation.

### George Mathew

In Santiago's statement, I think there were many generalisations, saying that radical Christian groups are on such and such a level and it can be an impediment to the real humanisation of society. But I was wondering, in the historical context of the nation and society or our immediate experiences in our country, whether that can be substantiated. How do you support the argument that this kind of movement will hamper the real humanisation process? An answer to this did not come from your statements. This can be a discouraging statement

for many who are really in the process of people's struggle.

### Paulo

One of the principles that I follow is to respect others who know reality. If I do not have enough knowledge of your reality, I must be very humble and I cannot give any suggestion. If I do not know, I prefer to listen. Because of that I would like to say to you, Santiago, that the radical Christians in Latin America, the theologians of liberation, are not working against humanisation. On the contrary, they are trying to give humanising answers to such a tragic situation as we have in Latin America. What they are trying to say is this, it is time for the Christians to become engaged in people's struggle. Then, it is possible for us in Latin America to begin to see what to do in order that the great masses of the exploited people begin to have the basic right of being respected. The radical Christians are saying: "we can no longer go to talk to these people in the slums to tell them, 'be patient, my children, the heaven belongs to you, the kingdom belongs to you'". No, no, our salvation starts here and not over there. I, as a 'Christian', cannot accept the dichotomy between the world and the transcendent. It is not my way of thinking. It is what Christians —

cardinals like Edward Pironio<sup>4</sup> stand for. He is a cardinal who could be a Pope. I don't believe Cardinal Pironio is working against humanisation. Pironio was speaking about our reality there and he remains a strong Christian.

I know that in Latin America, as elsewhere, humanisation takes time, in history. We cannot concretise our dreams within the time between Monday and Tuesday. But we also know that it is absolutely necessary to reduce the time. I request my friends to think of me for a moment—I have a house, I am a professor, I have prestige, my children always have doctors to see them when they are not well; so too my wife. We have shower with hot water, we have our dresses, we have money, we can go to the movies, we have a television set, we have a car, we have friends, we have electric instruments and we look forward to a future. In the last analysis, we have a future. We talk about tomorrow because we know that we have a tomorrow. O.K. for me, my wife and my children. You can tell them — Maria [my wife], Madalena, Cristina, Fatima, Joaquim and Lutgardes [my children]—‘look, I came here to tell you that the dreams take time in history, and so be patient.’ You can ask them to be patient and wait. I can

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4 Edward Cardinal Pironio, Cardinal from Argentina.

assure you that all of them will say, "O.K., we understand what you say, thank you." But what is very difficult for me, is—do not ask me—to go to the slum people of my country to tell them, "look, you have to be patient; you wait here, because the only thing we have to do is to wait."

I know it is not the proposal you give me. I do not want to be unjust with you all. What I am emphasising is: we cannot realise our dreams in India, immediately. We have to do something more than merely saying that the people have to wait. At least this is more appropriate in my continent than in India. In India the social situation is better than the situation in my country. Maybe, you don't have too much poverty in India. At the same time, my people are in misery. Therefore, perhaps, the people here can wait. This is what the radical Christians did say in Latin America, by writing books and so on. For instance, this is what my priest-theologian friend Gustavo Gutierrez in Peru, who wrote the book "Theology of Liberation", did. He is a fine man; he is a strong Christian. He wrote that beautiful book because he loves people, not because he hates. He wrote the book to humanise and not to dehumanise. He is a radical theologian. I would like to ask Santiago, at least, to understand the radical Christians in Latin America. I did not make a

reference to you here. The concern for Latin America is my weakness.

### **Nicky Cardozo**

I wish to make a comment in view of what Santiago said. In a way I am happy, and not discouraged as George Mathew mentioned. This brings to the house the conflict we have in our institutions, in our church. We are gathered here as Christians. A Christian speaks that an evil has been given birth to as a latent enemy in the form of Christian radicalism. Is this the church? Is it Christ speaking? Is it becoming, or not, of Christians? In the tribal area where we work, there are about 30,000 tribals who do not know what they are going to have today. When they speak up and they question these institutions, is it not a condemnation of the people who stand for Christ? I am happy that this has come before our group. And it is good we think about it. How can we be Christians and accept the forces that are questioning us, questioning our existence?

### **Joseph Velamkunnel**

I have made a little study of the Christian prayers from the point of view of the oppressor and the oppressed. Paulo says education is domesticating. I was trying to see the type of

prayer the church says. There is a kind of subtle domestication of the people going on through the prayers that we say.

Let me illustrate the type of social reality in which we are placed. In one of the villages we are working now, the people were asked to buy copy books, each costing 35 paise. The literacy programme was suffering because of the lack of copy books. One of the listeners went into his hut and brought to us a handful of rotten wheat taken from the railway godown. He said that he and his children were eating this stuff. Then he asked us: "where could I get money to buy the books?" Such human situations reveal a predominant aspect of the life of the masses.

In the context of such social reality of India, I examined one of the popular hymn books in India; hymns were classified from the point of view of their social content as follows:

<i>Individual centred "I" appearing</i>	<i>Ecclesial centred "We" appearing</i>	<i>Socially oriented, "I" &amp; "We" including non-Christians</i>	<i>Mixture from the Bible</i>	<i>Neutral</i>
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Now, against the background of the type of social reality I mentioned above, I ask myself what would be the effect of these hymns on the

devotees. Prayers and hymns are an expression of the faith-experience; they also shape the faith-consciousness. The Gospel and the historical Jesus reveal a sense of radicalism in favour of the poor. But I feel that in our prayers, hymns and in our teaching the radicalism is missing simply because the church has identified itself with a particular ideology in favour of rich and powerful. That ideology is communicated through our prayers and hymns. Interpretation of the gospel is part of the world-view in which we are educated and which we are continuing and unconsciously we are perpetuating that world-view. I feel the church in India has a need and urgency to re-interpret the Christian life, the vision, the prayer. These do contain a value system which we have not questioned. I feel very much that the radicalism of the gospel is watered down to the very minimum, and therefore it is no more appealing to those to whom it is addressed.

### **Thomas Joseph**

Speaking about ambiguity and the gradual resolving of ambivalence, we have got this problem; on the one hand, there is radicalism, and on the other hand, the philosophy “what good we can do, let us do it instead of talking about it too much”. These two attitudes are there. Our

objective as Christians or as 'becoming Christians' is that humanity must become more and more human. In this context, having worked in a similar situation, I find that the kind of 'constructive' developmental projects we are speaking about have no value. I have worked in a school and that had no value in solving the ambivalence which we are speaking about. That is why I came back to this question.

### Pradip Prabhu

I want to respond to it from the experience of conscientisation. When we began the process of conscientisation among the people, we realised one thing: that, without even reading books, there was a certain reality that we saw. When we began, within the suppressed consciousness of the people, we could see the oppressor was ever present as a part of their consciousness. Then the people began to become aware of their oppressor-consciousness. But the moment a kind of development came to their present religious form of existence — when they had more material well being — the oppressor-consciousness took attur and they co-operated with the oppressor. More and more people are reacting to this kind of development in our area because they feel that those who have been benefitted from the development that has occurred, them-

selves become oppressors. This is one of the logical consequences or the unintended effect of development. The second thing is that, when people say that they have no food, no shelter, etc. we often go to provide those things for them. But reflecting on it, we no longer see the people as not having food and shelter etc., but we see a denial of basic, fundamental human rights, even of a future.

The rights of the people are never given. The rights are always taken by the people. Now any effort to give rights will only slow the process of taking the rights. The people, whom I was referring to, themselves began to resent any people giving them rights. They even began resenting Indira Gandhi, during the emergency, who was trying to give them land. They said, "No, we have to take the land ourselves. It is our right to take this land." And those who got land tried to grab their neighbours' land. Whatever benefits came out of the development process among the people who were not conscientised, were immediately absorbed by the system. So the person who worked at developing himself has given up. For example, out of the 2,000 wells dug in our area, you won't believe, only a handful are used. Some of them have been given up because whatever it has produced had been eaten away by the system. And those who are

the beneficiaries of this scheme are being oppressed by the system. The whole development debate has come up in the context of this reality. That is, people are not aware of the oppressive nature of the benefits they are receiving.

**Moderator**

It is 11'Oclock and now we break for coffee.

### **After the Coffee Break**

**Moderator**

Now we are getting down to serious issues. I think it is good. I wonder if we could pursue the issue that is currently before the house a little more — the idea of approaches to human development. Could we pursue this idea a little further? Maybe, others would like to express themselves on this. Would anybody like to speak more about this?

**K.M. Thomas**

I do not have anything against development projects, or welfare programmes as such. But what I denounce is the philosophy behind the development programmes. You look at people as poor and suffering and immediately pity and compassion are evoked. You want to do something for the people, and end up with some

welfare programme. If you start your welfare programme or development project on just pity and compassion, I will denounce that. On the other hand, if you find that the people are exploited and oppressed (when I say exploited, I mean the fruits of those who are working for 8-12 hours or more are appropriated by the owners of the means of production) and decide to do something for them, making them realise that they are oppressed and exploited, then it is good. If you see people as exploited and there is a system which oppresses them, you will have a different approach to people altogether. You will see that people are victims of structural violence. You will see that the system as a whole deprives people of their food and other basic necessities of life. Why are people oppressed? You cannot just immediately jump to conclusions and start some development programmes. You will have to analyse critically the economic and political context in the country and then perhaps you might do something with a view to get access to the people. Only in that context I can subscribe to starting a development programme.

### **Pradip Prabhu**

I want to mention something about the play of power in the whole structure, that is, the

political power. In Bihar, for instance, right now the conflict between the backward and the forward classes, the people who are poor and the people who are privileged, is going on. The government machinery has given concession to the poor in certain areas but the official class is decidedly against them. Take, for instance, land reforms, minimum wages, legal rights etc. When we analyse all these, we see that the official class, that is, those who exercise power, use their power to suppress people's movement. Whenever little movements have come up, they have been ruthlessly suppressed, and the official class is aligned with the powerful, and decidedly against the poor. What is the response of the church? Can the church take a stand? What did the church do during the Emergency? In the area where I work there was a theft at the house of the superintendent of police. Immediately about 100 policemen surrounded the small slum colony and terrorised the whole people. Several were put in jail and one young fellow was beaten up so much so that he died within 48 hours. There is no system by which these helpless people could be legally protected. Can any body help out in this situation? Will the church take a stand? I am afraid no church, no organised religion, which is traditional and supportive of the system, will help these helpless people.

## Moderator

A comment here. Yesterday, during a discussion with Paulo, one of the government officials, who is in charge of the non-formal education, accepted the fact that we have the highest record, probably in the world, of correct, socially just legislations. We have legislation practically on everything — on land reforms, on bonded labour, and all kinds of wrongs are legislated against. Then power comes in, politics comes in and, as Paulo said yesterday, government, since it has to exist through holding on to power, will always be a class government versus a mass government, unless they get power from the masses. Generally, if this does not happen, they will not commit suicide. Therefore, when you try to implement some of the legislations we have, then the official hand comes down heavily. It looks nice to see these laws in the Constitution or in the statute book, but some of you, who have been trying to implement these laws, know what happens after that.

## A Participant

Speaking of development in the true sense of the word, it seems to me that very often we think that it is development of the poor only. Development in the pure Christian sense includes integral development of the physical and the

spiritual. Now the so-called developed people in the real sense are not really developed; they are either underdeveloped or wrongly developed. So when speaking of development of the poor, we cannot really develop them unless we touch the rich people. And there comes the conflict. But we have to tackle the rich. The question of their rights, privileges, etc. comes in the way. But without tackling that, I don't think we can develop poor people. I am saying this in reference to what Santiago said.

### **Pradip Prabhu**

Now we are talking of development. No development of the poor is possible. You cannot develop a poor man. You can liberate him. He can be liberated from the forces that make him poor and, in that context, I think the point of conscientisation would come. Conscientisation is directed not towards development. It is directed to where the man becomes effectively the author of his own history. He should be liberated from the forces that keep him as an object. And development again would reduce him as an object of history.

### **Santiago**

I think some of the apparent differences are on the basis of our understanding. I do not

know whether we can say, "we cannot develop the poor but we can only liberate them." I suppose these are all different kinds of understanding. My view is that there is no dispute whatsoever, among all of us here, about the basis, about the foundation. We talked about oppression, oppressed people, exploitation, etc. I think there is no dispute. If there is a dispute, it would be in the sense that when some are born they have got a right to oppress somebody else. I don't think anybody would stand up and contribute to that concept. Perhaps there are such confrontations among certain ideologies when you talk in terms of capitalism, communism, marxism etc. As students of economics and political philosophy, we understand the basic difference.

But I think this group, including me, fully subscribe to the view that exploitation should be eliminated, the oppressed people should be liberated, there should be development, there should be progress and all that. Whatever phrase we may use, it will not harm substantially, only that it may be political. And the real confrontation comes in the approach or in the strategies different people may try to exercise, for different reasons. And in that context, my personal experience is that neither the people who are not directly engaged in conscientisation work, nor the people who are engaged in conscientisation

work, try to see the importance of conscientisation. In my view, the ultimate liberation is going to be only the sum total of different efforts — the individual contribution, the collective contribution. For example, everybody cannot be a police constable — somebody has to be a mechanic, somebody has to be a pilot, somebody has to be the prime minister. I suppose this view is accepted. Power comes from the masses. We are seeing the latest developments in Iran. We will have to wait for another 5-10 years to see its result. This is an ongoing theme and a changing theme. So I feel that unnecessarily we seem to be dividing ourselves, commenting on certain strategies and approaches. I believe that every project, every programme, every effort has got its social, political and educational dimensions. Above all, if it has true liberation, particularly of the poor, in mind, it has the economic dimension. I will put it, even at some risk, as perhaps the most important in the initial stages. And unless we give these oppressed people a minimum economic base, what the theologians, the liberators, the specialists, the educators and everybody else are saying, has no value. Of course, these people spend a lot of time in writing articles and conducting seminars and discussing whether development is the same as liberation, and so on. We know that the lack

of economic base, primarily of the poor, is one of the reasons of their oppression, of their exploitation. And it is here this element of economic dimension is condemned by the religious as well as by the liberator. The religious men come and tell us that whatever you do at the level of economics is an existential matter. The radicals also give little importance to economic projects. I believe that this is probably the new evil force or the enemy I was referring to. I was not referring to any particular individual. I was referring to this particular dimension, which the traditionally orthodox religious men and the extremists — so-called liberating men — engage in, to my mind looks the same. They are probably emphasising different stages of the process. But more or less the 'religious man' and the 'liberating man' come and tell me, "well, economics is anti-development, project is anti-development".

If you organise a co-operative for tribals, or if you organise the tribals for irrigation work, they say, "no, no, don't do it right now; I have to go and live among them. I have to expose them to their rights; they should know what their rights are; you wait for another two years, please. And unless they are aware of their rights, even if you dig a well or start a cooperative now, you are only helping a vested interest." Now,

mind you, unless we accept that development and liberation are the final music which comes from different instruments, accepting that everybody has to be harmonious and accepting the different rules, nothing is going to happen. I don't want to use the word 'radical', for instance, as something totally different from the so-called 'conservative', because there are hundreds of people who call me a radical, but perhaps there are thousands of people who call me a conservative. It depends on from which angle they look at me. Some don't accept me as a part of the 'structural' church, but others take me as a part of the 'structural' church. For me...

**Moderator**

Paulo is curious to know who you are.  
(laughter)

**Santiago** continues

For me, it is not the so-called social order and its vision of which we must have a clear-cut idea first. I don't know. Different people have different visions. I only know about the oppressed, I only know about the exploited, and I know that economics in the beginning is more important even to promote the spiritual, political, educational aspects of man. I want to do it in the shortest possible time and I do not want

either the capitalist or the religious man or the liberator to come and tell me, "you are anti-development".

### Paulo

I think you said something before concerning this point, Santiago. But I think it is a very interesting moment for all of us or some of us to commence a very interesting discussion. You can ask me, why don't you commence. Yes, I have my position and I will give you that just now. But, I think, what is important to discuss now is the question he has placed on the table vis-a-vis your reality. Because of that I cannot start. But I am sure many of you here, whether you agree with Santiago or not, will have many things to say. I will say two things only.

For me, one of the most important men in this century, a fantastic revolutionary, a humanist, is Amilcar Cabral,<sup>5</sup> the leader of the liberation struggle of the people of Guinea-Bissau, in

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5 Dr. Amilcar Cabral was the founder of 'Partido Africano da Independencia da Guine e Cabo Verde' (PAIGC) i.e. African Party for Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde — 1956. He was assassinated in January 1973. Seven months later the country proclaimed independence. Today the Constitution designates PAIGC the "supreme expression of the sovereign will of the people".

Africa, a former Portugese colony. He was killed 6 years ago. He said in one of his texts that the people don't fight because of their beautiful ideas, but people fight in order to overcome concrete and material problems they have. He emphasised the economic base for that. The people, he said, fight not because of the excellent ideas but in order to eat, to dress. After they achieve the material needs, people will continue to fight for different values, but in the beginning people are interested in fulfilling their material needs. We cannot deny the material basis of reality. This is the most challenging aspect of the society. However, the question is, to know what is domesticating or alienating the people more. I would think that our objectives are substantive.

Santiago said that there is a certain radicalisation — not in the good sense — on the part of some of us. Sometimes we are more revolutionary than we should be. Then we become idealists and lose the sense of history. In this context, let us use the word 'radicalisation'. Maybe, I would say 'certain sectorisation' as I discussed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes we think that we can make the transformation of society magically and then instead of helping

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<sup>6</sup> *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 17-19.

the process, we are retarding it. We have this experience in Latin America and you also must have these types of things here.

For me, it reveals, above all, certain petit-bourgeois ideology among the intellectuals: they may not work but think that "we possess the revolutionary thinking". Maybe because of that we go to the oppressed people, to the workers, that we have that class-consciousness which they don't have. It is very funny, because we state that the working class does not have class-consciousness. We are petit-bourgeois intellectuals and then we say that we have working class-consciousness. It is a contradiction. Then we try to put the class-consciousness inside the heads of the workers. It is an absurdity. All these things we also have in Latin America. I think that it would be interesting for you to respond to the analysis which Santiago gave. I don't think he made this analysis in the air. He must have experienced. It is time, I think, for some of you to respond.

### P.T. Kuriakose

I don't think Santiago's analysis is correct. If today the WCC or such groups could give to the millions of really poor people enough money, issue cheques and say "here you are, make yourself an economic base", I could have understood

Santiago's statement and his argument. That is not possible. Is it possible for them to have sufficient resources for their asking immediately now, so that they can be on their own? It is not possible. It is not possible for the society, as it is organised today, to provide to the poor people the necessary economic base. And equally, it is not possible for the poor people themselves to acquire the strength immediately here and now, so that they get muscles for their weak bones. Let me ask a question. How do these people get their economic power? Then to me it means that through the process of development — liberation or whatever you may call it — somehow or other these poor people will have to be given an opportunity to decide as to how they will acquire that power of decision-making so that they get the economic strength that we speak about. We know that today it is not possible for them to be decision-makers of the structures of our society. The decision-makers are somebody else. And we know from the experience of all of us that power will not be given because they ask for it. Therefore, I do not see any other way than people struggling and fighting for this. Economic power, therefore, cannot be assumed to be given by someone. I think Santiago has touched that point, which is a problem — problem of social justice — in this country.

We are all presently engaged in development projects. We cannot, with the philosophy of 'development' organisations, solve the problem of poverty. We do what we can because there are good people in other countries who are willing to send money. The projects are not funded by Indian money. Because there are people to send us money, let us use that money and try to build up the economic base, social base, educational base of the people for development. I think there is a big tamasha going on in the name of development. There is very little involvement of the community. Very few of us are willing to link Christ with development. I submit that Christian churches will not be the ones which will stand witness to the liberation of this country, liberation of the poor.

We all are development workers. I work in a comfortable situation. Many of you are working in an equally comfortable or less comfortable situation, but when the chips are down, when people are fired at, when houses are burnt, very few of us are willing to live with them, suffer with them, die with them. Earlier in this meeting, somebody asked the question, "can't someone provide support when people are suppressed?" Unless the Christian churches, the institutional churches become witnesses to that kind of a struggle, I do not see any possibility of the

church in this country playing a major role in the real development of the people, that is, the process of liberation. It is because very few of us are willing to pay the price, individually or collectively. *Paulo used an expression yesterday. He said, "you cannot make history without a price"*. We are unable to make that history, because we are unwilling to pay the price.

## TRIBALS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Nirmal Minz

Moderator, many references have been made about the tribal people. I think this question of the economic base is just a pretence on the part of the nation as well as the church. They have been doing injustice to the tribal people. For the last 30 years, what they have been doing is to drain the national wealth in the name of tribals and it never reached them, but it went to others. This is one thing. Secondly, what is the church doing? It is doing a welfare sort of service. But, in the struggle of the tribals, the church is not willing to participate. I am speaking as a tribal Christian. In the real struggle for social justice, the church is moving away from the people. I am speaking out of my experience. We started a small college. You will be amazed, we started this institution with a meagre amount of Rs. 53/-.

Who will dream of starting a college with this amount? Now the church agencies are not willing to support us because of our stand: that the college is the people's liberating experience in which, at a point, we would like the people to participate. It is not according to their (church agencies) interest and their ideologies that the people are going to plan. They do not support us because of our stand. I am speaking as a responsible person, but I want to mention that the German agencies are not willing to come. It has come as a challenge to many around us.

Only yesterday I was discussing these issues with a few of my teaching staff of my college. Anything can happen immediately and the work of the college can be disrupted any moment. This is the sort of situation we are going through. The church is not able to see this and the official churches are in a sense indifferent of what is happening around. Therefore, what Santiago says does not make sense to me and I would like to say that people's struggles at the local places, or other places, are important in that they want to be human in little things or bigger things. At that point, because of the political, economic and other dimensions, the church as such is really unwilling to participate. In this process, any time, any moment, the university may say, "you must close down your college, be-

cause you don't meet the requirements." Any time the government could say, "since you are trying to politicise the whole thing, you close down the project". 1900 students and a few teachers are being mobilised in this direction and that is a dangerous thing for the society around. I feel very uncomfortable sometimes as to what may be the end of all this. Our intention is that the whole community should be conscientised in such a way that they feel their role. They can do things as any one else does. They have acquired some kind of competency. It has a completely different understanding of education than that of St. Xaviers'. We have no intention whatsoever to compete with them, because that is completely a different process. Our concern is, how to relate to the next mohalla (village): the next door. This is our concern. We are a part of the society in which we have to work and live. I would like the whole understanding of ambiguity — to have one foot here and one foot there. This is a very big trouble for me personally, and for my colleagues. I came here just to find some kind of light in this struggling process to set up some kind of strategy and some kind of process which is helpful in order to really go ahead. To provide an economic base is itself a big question for some. For me, it is not. I think the tribal people can substantiate this as a

principle that money and material needs are not the primary need for them. Their primary need is a recognition by the nation and the church that these people are the people of this country, they have a culture, they have values in tribal life. As you know, the tribal society is a casteless one. It is one society in our country which could teach something to the country. For example, the way we work in the fields. The man-woman relationship is the best. Equality of sex in our area is a norm of life. This is not inherited from the Christian way of life. And if these values are not accepted by the nation, what can we do? I have been asked to fall in line with the national mainstream. What does it mean? Is it to give up the equality for men and women? In this kind of struggle, how can you help us?

## MEANS AND METHODS

### Matheikal

I would like to reflect on something that Santiago said. He said we have an agreement on the main direction. I feel that we are not agreed. Santiago said that one level we are in agreement that we all want the people to come up. But I think we disagree at a deeper level; and the basic difference is in the way we want this 'coming up' to be achieved.

Do we trust the people? When we have ordinary development programmes, normally it is dictated from outside. For example, even if the people are not ready, the development people want to dig a well. That means people are not consulted. They need not wealth so much as something else. They have other needs which are much more vital, much more close to them, eg. to be consulted about their life. If we are really concerned about the people — concerned as to how they can be helped to grow as human beings — then how can we impose something for which they do not feel the need? Another thing about the economic base: we know that the poor people are being exploited by the richer few and practically all the money is going to the latter. Actually, all this money belongs to the poor people. It is being extracted from them. But they will not be able to get this money — their dues — till they are able to understand what is their right. They need to know what their rights are and also to get organised in order that they can get their rights. And what is due to them should really go to them. Actually at the root of this whole thing is the decision-making power. At present the richer few, or the funding agencies, are the decision-makers and not the people. If people were the decision-makers, all this money would have gone to them.

So I think there is a very basic difference in the approaches. The radicals, the people who are really working in order that the people will realise what their rights are, have to see that the poor are effectively organized to get their rights from other people who are appropriating these to themselves. I wonder how we can make the people aware to be really human, as Paulo said. If you are helping them, making them aware of their own rights, it is perfectly all right.

### San Jose

There are two things that I would like to say. Firstly, I want to comment on Fr. Matheikal's statement that there are some very serious differences in the methodology of our process and so on, particularly with one remark that Santiago made that the words 'liberation' and 'development' are the same thing. I think they are two different things. To say that we cannot develop the poor is a very important statement. We cannot develop the poor, but I believe we can only facilitate their development process. People have to develop themselves. That is one remark I wanted to make.

The second remark I wanted to make is that the picture of the church, its stand, is one of identification with certain very strong power structures. We get some sort of feeling very

often that we are institutionalised and that our ability to really go to the 'national-life', to the people to identify ourselves with them, is hampered by the fact that we have one foot on the one side and the other foot in a different camp altogether. Unless this identification of the church is made to cease, I do not think there is much the church is going to do. Unless you try to develop that feeling from within and unless we make our ideas of leadership (something which is a part and parcel of the situation in which we are working and not something which is thrust upon people), there is nothing much that we can do.

### George Ninan

There have been very good responses to Santiago's comment. I want to respond from my practical experiences in Bombay working with a group of people who are engaged in the slums. When I look back, we have two approaches seen in our activities.

The first is a group of people trying to associate with the slum dwellers in Bombay. One thing is that we have some good programmes like the Community Health Care. Everybody speaks about it because there is community participation, there is lot of activity. The second approach is based on our philosophy of

organising the people for *morchas* etc. to fight for their rights. In our own church, we feel that wherever we have gone with the latter kind of involvement, we had a very bad image and it was almost impossible to work in that situation. We are now working with a Bombay Slum Dwellers United Front. People are brought together on the issue of eviction, which is a real threat to their own lives, their own existence. In those places, people are participating, and it can be a process of liberation. I would not say that we have achieved anything, but, from my practical experience, I can very well say that when the church or the donor agencies go with the resources that are available, we will not be able to do this. That is why I agree with Pradip that if the right is taken away from the people and then we go and give the right to them, we would be blocking the process of people demanding their rights, and we would be doing anti-development or anti-liberation acts.

The second experience that I would like to share is when I was sitting on a committee—a church committee talking about rural development—they wanted to plant trees. That is to say, the committee wanted to do exactly what the government was doing for rural people. This raises important questions. Whenever we sub-

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stitute what the government ought to be taking care of, then we remove people's participation, people's presence. Do we have enough funding agencies to come every time to do this, because this is a national approach to the rural poor? How can we say that there is people's participation when the decision is already made by big money?

What I am trying to say is that in a particular area, because somebody else is providing the finance, people will forget to demand their rights from the government. We ought to be taking care of the society, we ought to be taking care of decisions. So in my own experience, which is rather very limited, I would say wherever the church has gone along with donors or this kind of people's participation, which is already decided by those who give the money, the church will be working against the larger interests of the society.

### **Pradip Prabhu**

I want to share an experience. After having begun to work with a group of young tribals, who were organising themselves, I realised that there were tremendous fallacies in my own thinking. When I go to the poor people, I realise that I go with a static concept of the people that they will also be objects of my

thinking process. After having done professional social work, the first reaction was, "let us give them something". But these young people have changed my way of thinking. Now I am proud of the fact that I am part of the struggle in which these young adivasis are engaged. When they became the subject of my learning process, I began to learn from them. They taught me that they were not poor, but they were the ones to whom human rights were denied. They never thought in terms of money. They thought in terms of power. We have no power today to prevent the denial of their rights. That is to say, we must have the power which can stop their denial of their rights. All things like the future, shelter etc. can be thought of later. If we are not allowing them human existence, we cannot think of developing them.

I fully agree with Dr. Minz. People taught us many beautiful realities and that was where I began realising why development was destroying people. Development is introducing within the people the element of competition, of consumerism, etc. Such development is introducing basically a capitalistic society. "Why do you force me to work more? I am happy with it. Can't you accept that I am happy with it?", they ask. You are feeling bad because you eat five meals a day and I am eating only two

meals, and that you want me also to eat five meals, so that you may feel good. Also I realise that, there is a problem with all of us as Christians, as a possessing class. We are feeling bad about the dispossessed. And all the time we try to make them possessors so that we will feel good. The adivasi young men taught me that this is only my problem. I understood that if I opted to be dispossessed like them, then I would begin to see differently. The church is afraid of losing its position. We cannot opt to be on the side of the poor. The inevitable result of this is that the church is feeling bad as it is being bypassed by history.

### Thomas Ninan

We talked of development and providing a false security for the people. Along with that there is one more point that I would like to stress. The leadership is lacking in strength and the power while participating in the struggles of the people. But the people are moving forward somehow or other. Dr. Minz has raised a vital issue. Who is going to support him and his people? I feel that today, in all these projects and its leaders, an inner spirituality is lacking. I would like to emphasise: the inner spirituality is lacking in all our development projects and the liberation processess.

**Santiago**

I think all of us are coming closer — a bit more, than half an hour ago.

**Paulo**

You are a big politician!

(laughter)

**Santiago** continues

I think some aspects of the economic accent are cleared by now. I totally agree with the previous speakers. When I mentioned in the initial stages of our discussion about the development of the poor people, what I meant was that economic aspect at a given point of time is more important, perhaps than any other (as a starting point). I am not against the Slum Dwellers United Front. In our emphasis on the economic dimension, one of the important activities is the Slum Dwellers United Front. But it should not be in isolation. It should be in conjunction with so many other activities. I did not say that every paisa that we spend in India is derived from donors. If we can accept ideas from whatever corner they come from, — Paulo from Brazil, Marx from Germany, or, I don't know, from Christ—why not we accept money? Money is not something which somebody takes out from his pocket and gives out. Of course I

do it sometimes when I get to some road junction, when lights stop my car. A poor woman stretches out her hand and I give her something, as an expression of solidarity. It might be one rupee or it may be even 10 paise — that does not matter. I know that by doing that I am not going ultimately to liberate her. The whole development and liberation process is in terms of what we actually feel, what we actually experience, what happens to me, to my family, to my friends, my relatives, my neighbourhood and my society. It is something which is very, very radically demanding on me. And there may be certain situations where I have to emphasise the economic aspect. I call it solidarity. Doctors say, "if you don't take care of the brain of the child from the moment it is born till at least he reaches the age of four or five, you are condemning that child for the rest of the life." If you don't take care of the brain of the child, I would think that you are morally wrong. And if the government cannot do it, others can do. There is a certain gradation in needs. There are primary needs, emergency needs. What happened when cyclone hit the Andhra coast? Hundreds of seminarians and students rushed there. Are we here to say that when the tidal wave hit the Vijayawada coast, we should all have sat back and talked about 'what I

learnnd from others'. I suppose what I learn from others is important. But the obligation of one human being to another human being is in terms of the universality of the situation, under the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. Somebody may be terribly interested in the Slum Dwellers United Front. In fact, somebody should give you the money for that. This is not to be excluded from the whole effort we are talking about. What I am personally against is the sectorisation, as Paulo said, and if you put one sector and say that the other sectors are entirely wrong, this would be an incorrect statement. Can we not just understand that if people are babies, certain actions have to be taken at that level — even at our academic, intellectual level? Among many of us here, some are theologians, some are professors, some are clerks like me. We may not understand the intellectual ways and explain it in a poetic way. The point is that honesty on the part of every individual is important not only to his own rights but the rights of others. One will have to play different songs at different times. If one sector excludes the other sector, there comes the problem for me. I am not excluding any sector; I need the sum total of all the sectors put together. It is not a question of the element of polarisation. Let me just hit on what Rev. Minz has just said.

It is not a question of whether my project is approved or his project is approved. It is a general issue. Therefore, I personally believe that every effort has to have its spiritual, economic, educational, political dimensions and every effort has to be evaluated in the context of these dimensions. Not to be naive but to be realistic, to be really friends in need and deed to see that these poor people become their own masters. Unless we emphasise the practicality of it in the whole process the humanisation — the human dimension — is a casualty. I fully believe that when I emphasise economics, I need not say that politics is involved: When somebody emphasises politics, please go ahead, but let us do it together.

### **Nirmal Minz**

I wanted to say a few things. First, I think as a church, as Christian people, as institutional church, we are a hindrance on the path of the poor to get their rights. This is very clear to me. The amount of money which flows in the name of welfare projects itself is an obstacle in the way. All the poor are contributing to the national wealth, and the difficulty with our country is that proportionately what they give is not coming back. In this process, the church, by doing this kind of thing, is not helping but

rather hindering. How best the church can help people to get back the money for their use? Our church, by doing little things here and little things there, is accentuating this process of being unable to help the people. The church tells us "you are weak", and I resent that very much. I have told my people that they are not weak, they are strong. "You have two hands. You can work more than any one else. Nothing is wrong with you." How do we deal with this situation? Unless we go forward, nothing is going to happen. At this point, we should decide which side we are and whether we want to be an obstacle or a help.

### Thomas Joseph

People have been reacting to Santiago's comment. Especially in connection with his comments on the Andhra Pradesh cyclone, what do we do in a situation like this? — An emergency situation, as Santiago has put it. What I question is the ideology that dictated the type of relief that had to be given, the type of huts that have been constructed and also the refusal to question the misuse of central aid that went into that area. About 70 crores of rupees was allocated for that, I believe. When the need arose to ask for an account of that money, we were thrown out, not by Krishna Rao, the

minister, but by our religious superiors.

This is the ideology I am speaking about. There was an emergency and there was need for an immediate work on humanitarian grounds and people did that work. What did we give them? We constructed huts which were not in the tradition of the people and I heard that in two months those huts were blown off by the wind. How did that happen? We went for development. We gave them huts. Did that need for the huts come from the people? No, we defined it. And that is where the problem is. And that is what we are speaking about — an ideology of development which we foster on others — and not coming from the people.

### Samuel Rayan

In the first place, I would like to make a distinction between natural calamities like cyclones and man-made realities like economic and political systems. Nature's calamities happen. History does not happen but is made by us. Trying to overlook the distinction between what happens in nature and what people create by their free decisions would be disastrous; it would paralyse us completely into inaction and/or irresponsibility.

In the second place, may I take off from the reference made to the brains of the three-to-five

year old babies. The baby and its brain surely need to be taken care of. But thousands of babies have damaged brains and eyes; not due to lack of care after birth only, but due to lack of care and food before their birth, for them and their parents and grandparents, for ages and generations. Could such a situation, caused by an economic and social tradition of several centuries, be treated as an emergency situation? An emergency is a particular situation, and has to be met. It has to be distinguished from lasting situation based on enduring structures and systems. To look at social mechanisms as emergency situation and to meet them with relief work all the time is both intellectually and practically inadequate. We have been giving alms as mentioned here; we have been giving a rupee or ten paise at crossroads. But to think that would suffice is tragic. We have been meeting 'emergency' for decades and 'emergency' remains. The reason is that we have been treating the top of the tree for a disease at its roots. If we are honest and mean business, we must go to the roots and be literally radical, and tackle the system itself and its structures.

Thirdly, it may be true that land lies idle in Australia or elsewhere; it may be that there is affluence abroad; and that much of the

amassed wealth and grabbed land belongs to the poor of the world. And I would not object to the restoration to the working class and the poor of the wealth that has been taken from them. But the land of the landless of India and the wealth our workers have produced are not all in Australia and Germany. The land of the people in India has been taken away from them by some Indians; the product of the labour of Indians has been syphoned off for enjoyment in high places by some Indians. Santiago's suggestion is that the deprivation here be made up through funds from abroad which the donors are 'pleased' to give. My position is that the dispossessed must be enabled to stand together, assert their rights, win back what is theirs, struggle to establish new social relationships which would correspond to their dignity as people and equality as citizens of India, and refuse to be objects of 'charity' and paternalism, whether these be Indian or foreign. I admit that the money which comes from Germany is also made by the poor. There is a system of exploitation around the world. We have been lacking in critical understanding of the system within which we are working. We should pay some attention to that.

Fourthly, I want also to say a word about sectionalisation. Santiago's position precisely

represents sectionalisation. It does not look at the whole mechanism and the whole working of the system. Instead of doing that, an attempt is made to supply the deprived with a little of the wealth that has been taken away from them. My main interest is in the overcoming of such sectionalism.

Fifthly, another important point: there is a whole concern in the ruling classes to take words like 'liberation' — the terminology of the working class — and give them different meaning and utilise them at the level of the ruling class. We should be careful not to be taken in by this issue. When Jesuits were running big institutions for the ruling class on the assumption that culture and Christian ideals would trickle down to the masses, John Baptist de la Salle thought differently and started schools for the poor. He had a different philosophy. The ruling class has mechanisms of annexing for themselves whatever is excellent. It happened in the education field. They captured the de la Salle schools. It is happening today with regard to words and ideas. Words like 'liberation' are annexed by the upper class and given a larger meaning, so that it is no more useful for anybody; it has become too inflated to be useful. Similarly the ruling class also have begun to say that they are also oppressed; 'because we

oppress you, we also suffer and become oppressed!' This is an extremely dangerous situation and unless we are careful, this sort of cultural annexation of our minds might happen; that will hold up the process of liberation for a century.

### **Moderator**

We could adjourn for lunch at this point. I think we have arrived at a point of ambiguity which is a good point to arrive at.

We cannot educate people; people educate themselves. We cannot liberate people; people get liberated themselves. We only facilitate education and liberation.

## **AFTERNOON**

### **TYPES OF CHURCH**

#### **Moderator**

I am sure we would like to listen a lot more to Paulo. We would like to know some of his opinions, his ideas, his point of view. The first question I would like to raise is on the churches in Latin America. It came from some of you during the lunch break that Paulo had made a distinction between the traditional, modern and prophetic church, with particular reference to

Latin America. I would like Paulo to comment on this.

**Paulo**

Some years ago I wrote an article which appeared in English, French and German, but I do not know whether it came here.<sup>7</sup> I tried to analyse this problem with regard to Latin America. Of course, my approach had to do with Latin America. I wrote that article because a question was asked in a meeting. Some people asked me, "What is the educational role of the church?" I tried to demonstrate in that article that we cannot speak generally of the educational role of the church. I personally cannot do that without analysing what kind of church it is. Then I shared my experience in Latin America and the role of the church there.

I described three kinds of churches which I see in Latin America:

(a) The traditional one — no matter Catholic or Protestant — I am not interested in that. That is the missionary church which is a colonial church; a very alienating church. I tried to situate historically this kind of church in Latin

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America in the historical process of that continent.

(b) The second kind of church, which appears also in a certain moment of history in Latin America, is the modernised church; but for me the modernised church is the traditional one, which becomes modernised in order to be much more effectively traditional. And I remember that I said in this article that for me both these churches had nothing to do with history. I remember saying that this kind of church speaks about Easter, but rejects to make Easter. That is, they are afraid to die precisely because they die without resurrection in history.

(c) And the third kind of church is the prophetic one. For me the prophetic church is as old as the Christian message is without the traditions and as new as the Christian message is without modernisation. It is a church which tries to make Easter. Because of this it does not have the fear to die. And then, because of the fact that there is no fear to die, it is possible for the prophetic church to continue to exist in history. For me, the radical Christians and the theologians of liberation — may I say it with humility — are the expressions of this prophetic church in Latin America. Of course, there are differences among them which are tactical differences, concerning some solutions, some ways of

reacting. And you find in Latin America in this proper perspective bishops, the lay people, men and women, workers, pastors, priests, theologians, cardinals and of course when we go in the area of the hierarchy, it diminishes the quantity. But, nevertheless, people are becoming more and more engaged in the liberating process. Also we have differences of approach, we have different life styles, we have different styles of prophetic work. It is possible that this kind of church is not yet a majority. The majority is with traditional and modern church. But the presence of prophetic people in Latin America, in my point of view, is a hope and a very good sign. We also have very interesting theology; for example, the black theology. James Cone<sup>8</sup> is a very interesting theologian. This perspective is there in Europe and Africa. This is how I see the different churches existing simultaneously in the dynamics and contradictions of the historical process of Latin America.

## SUCCESS OF CONSCIENTISATION

### Moderator

I would like to ask a question at this point. This question is not entirely my own. This per-

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<sup>8</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Lippincott Co. (New York, 1970).

tains to conscientisation. It is doing very well in a small place like Guinea-Bissau. That is rather manageable. But a country of India's problems of language, culture, socio-economic, political structure etc. (you know something about it) and with the size and the population (we are moving to around 700 million), how do you see the role and relevance of conscientisation programme as to its effectiveness? What are the chances of its succeeding, becoming a movement, a mass movement really changing people? Would you like to tackle that concretely?

### Paulo

I don't know whether I would be able to articulate in a clear way what I think. But first of all, I have the impression that we would not have to seek conscientisation as a movement. It does not exist for me. For me, the first thing you have to do is to forget that. You may smile and think that 'Paulo came from far away to tell us to forget something'. I say, 'yes'. I am trying to forget the word 'conscientisation', but not the process. For the last seven years I never used this word. You would not find it in any article I wrote. The only possibility is that you may find a reference to an article this word is in. I wrote this in 1974. That was because I had one day seminar in Geneva to demythologise

conscientisation and de-schooling — these two words. This was the last time I used these two words. When we talk about the possibility of a movement of conscientisation, I think that we are taking conscientisation as if it were a certain instrument with which we go to the field. And it is not.

May be, the good question would be, 'Paulo, what do you think about the possibility in India for overcoming exploitation, in order to create a new society?' — this is the question. My answer is, I don't know. Because, if I ask you how do you think you can overcome the exploitation in Brazil, what do you tell me? The only difference among us is concerning our knowledge. I am here for the second time and maybe you have never been to Brazil. But you know as well about India as I know about Brazil. As you cannot say what I can do in Brazil, so also I cannot tell you what you can do here. But it does not mean that we cannot talk about realities. Of course, we can talk. But you don't expect me to be so aware of the development here or the reality.

The other question should be, 'Paulo, do you think that formal education could play some role in the whole process of transformation in India or in Brazil? Do you think it is possible for us to transform the reality of India

by formal education?' Let us think something about it. I would tell you that only in certain moments I would touch conscientisation because, as I told you, I don't reject the process. But that word is too much corrupted.

First of all, the process of transformation of a society — real transformation — a revolutionised transformation — cannot be done without the great masses of the oppressed class. Without the real, conscious participation of the masses, the oppressed classes, we can have only a coup d'etat. But not the real revolution which tries to change radically the modes of production and the social relationships in the process of production. For me, this is the main issue. But the participation of the masses in the process of transformation of society — and when I say radical transformation, I am not saying, necessarily, transformation has come. Necessarily, I think when we try to change the modes of production to reorient production to create a new society, and you will have to do it historically; it depends on the circumstance, it depends on the moments and possibilities. But, anyway, the participation of the people is done organisationally. We don't organise for nothing, we organise for something. And then the process of organising is an educational one. Essentially, this is an educational process which implies praxis of the peo-

ple. Side by side, the leadership is together with the people. This is conscientisation. Conscientisation is not an intellectual game. Conscientisation is not something to avoid social conflicts. I am emphasising this.

Ever since I started using this word, many people in Latin America began saying that I used this word to avoid the class conflict. I never said that. Try to organise great masses of people through groups. It implies that education, the formal education, is also an act of knowing, a process of knowing. This is why it is also conscientisation. Of course, it proposes some risks for those who are engaged in it. Then all these questions have to do with the question: 'how to motivate the masses of the oppressed classes to start thinking that they are being oppressed and then to change the reality'. It is a very serious question. Because of that, sometimes I am afraid, by using the word conscientisation, we are hiding the true dimension of the problem. But if you ask me, 'Paulo, do you think that through the formal, systematic education we could transform the society?', I would say, 'no, for me it is not possible'. It is a dream, an impossible dream, to the extent that formal education is not a ladder for revolution. Revolution or social transformation is in itself an educational programme or an educational process. Revolution or social radical

transformation does not have in the systematic education its reservoir. I think that it is very easy to understand.

Once again I repeat the example I have given in the meetings here. It was not the bourgeois education which shaped the bourgeoisie; but on the contrary, it was the bourgeoisie that by its revolution, very revolution, got power to shape education. In France, alone, the bourgeoisie revolution did cost 3,00,000 people. But by arriving in power the bourgeoisie shaped its education in order to multiply its ideology. This is what happened and this is what is happening now. Because of that, if you have a so-called bourgeois democracy even in a socialist context, *it is inevitable that education has to reproduce the ideology. I don't know even one place in the world in which it is not a fact. It has to do like this.* Because of that I used to say that if the University of Havana works exactly like Harvard, one of them is wrong. They cannot be equal; one is wrong. The systematic education cannot change society. How is it possible for us to think that those who have economic power, and because of that political power, define education and the aims of education? They are not philosophers. The philosophers discuss that and those who have power prescribe. Then how is it possible to expect them to organise a system of education which helps the oppressed to dis-

cover that they are oppressed: to perceive the mechanisms of oppression. No, it would be asking too much to expect from those who have power to do that; to work against their interest, to the extent that they are not interested in committing economic suicide. They cannot do that.

In order to make my position clear, I would like to say that I am not against the process of conscientisation. (Just now, when I was resting during lunch break, I read the booklet<sup>9</sup> you [Fr. Matheikal] gave me and I liked it very much. I think you are doing a very interesting work. I would encourage you to go on.) The only thing I would ask you is, having understood the word instead of the process, do not mystify it. I share your frustrations and all that. I don't know whether I was clear.

I must tell you that I am getting tired. My schedule has been really changed. I am getting tired precisely because of the language. In

9 J. T. Matheikal, *Orientation for NAEP Animators*, The AICUF House (Madras, 1978), 34 pp. This is a guide for an orientation programme for the animators chosen from the village centres for the NAEP (National Adult Education Programme) in their conscientisation, community development and adult literacy efforts.

Geneva, I speak Portugese every day with my wife, my children and I speak English also every day. But I have my ideas, the structure of thinking in Portugese. Because of several historical reasons, you can think and speak in English. But that is not my case. Hope what I said is clear. By saying that systematic education cannot change society, I don't want to 'de-stimulate' you. (Laughter.) I would like to stress, it cannot really make the global change. But I hope that if the million people who leave the universities and schools get the good perception of reality, then you can also impart information about reality through your school. I think you understood my analysis on formal education.

## BOURGEOIS EDUCATION

### Samuel Rayan

This is with reference to the remark that bourgeois education did not produce the bourgeois class but that the bourgeoisie used bourgeois education in order to perpetuate their ideology and their position. I would like you to look at the historical fact as it happened in most colonial countries. In India the British introduced a newly fabricated system of education which I believe was meant to domesticate at least a certain section of the people that they

might willingly serve the colonial regime. Now these people did willingly serve and profit by it. By entering into the system, they have also utilised the system to throw out the conqueror, to take his place and become the brown British in India. Here we see how the bourgeois colonial education has produced the modern Indian bourgeoisie who know how to utilise this instrument to secure the best positions for themselves.

### **Paulo**

I think it is very interesting because it is peculiar to several other colonial countries. My impression is that the colonisers, of course try, first of all, to de-nationalise the nationals. They try, for example, to spread, to convince the nationals that they are 'natives' almost as a derogatory term. It is very interesting to analyse the ideological background of the language. I think it is not so easy for an Englishman or at least it is not usual for an Englishman to speak of themselves as natives. For example, I never forget an instance. Some years ago I was in Columbia University in New York at a seminar. At one point, I looked at a young man and said, "you, native of this country, why are you like this"? I said that deliberately because they tell me "you are a native of Brazil". But he said, "look, Sir, I am not a native". Then I discussed the

ideological ingredients of the language, in order to understand your question — native and nationals. Because of that I always say, 'nationals', 'national people' and not native people. In Australia, for example, they speak about the aborigines. In India you talk about tribals. Even the tribal people had to end up by having to name them tribals. Why? From the point of view of the colonisers (by the way the coloniser does not have language; they have only dialect) maybe they could not understand you. Because when they arrived here many many years had passed behind your existence and then it was not so easy to understand you. But they speak about culture with regard to what they create — they speak about art, they speak about Beethovan or Bach. The people here had the language. But they had not the problem or related dialect of the coloniser. So they could not express science and technology. The colonisers think and act as if the languages of the world had been as they are today, as if the languages of the different people in the world did not have to be increasingly proved according to the praxis which can be the source of development for them. The French language, for instance, did not have the problems to follow technology, scientific development, at that stage of its development. French have difficulty sometimes to translate science and

technology because they don't have words which correspond to the new advance in technology. This is why, for example, we say, 'press' in French also. Because 'press' did not come to France at that stage. That is, it was not then something which was peculiar to the language of the colonisers.

One of the preoccupations of the colonisers is to denationalise the nationals, a group of them, and of course they can work with the petit-bourgeoisie in the beginning, and also later the national bourgeoisie in order to make them more colonisers than the coloniser in a certain way. And then their education is absolutely important, absolutely necessary, in order to reshape the nationals to put them in the same direction of the colonisers. That is why I am convinced that Amilcar Cabral is making reference not to Asia but only to Africa and discussing the liberation movement and the role of the petit-bourgeoisie in these movements. He said there is just one possibility for the petit-bourgeoisie intellectuals to have the courage to commit class-suicide — to be born again as revolutionaries. He continues to say that if they do not do that, they will go through the liberation movement to get in power and, when they get power, they will become bourgeoisie in power; the very power they got from the masses

of the people with whom they fought to get freedom. And then, by becoming bourgeoisie in power, they betray the very liberation movement. They transform what should be the liberation of the people into a class problem which concerns their interests. Then they are organised. This is what characterises, this is what happens. It has happened a lot of times in history — the classic colonialist position.

The petit-bourgeoisie becomes the bourgeoisie in power; the bureaucrat bourgeoisie in power; far from the masses of the people, and necessarily depending on the former bourgeoisie colonising class in power. This is what characterises the new colonial country. It depends on its former coloniser. This is what we have in Latin American countries with the exception of Cuba. We got independence many years ago and we continue to be depending.<sup>10</sup> For all this, the formal education of the colonisers is really important for this minority. The national minority, if they really do the suicide, have to 'undo' what they learnt from the colonisers. If not, then you continue the same line of interest

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10. Brazil was proclaimed an independent kingdom in 1822, but Portugal formally recognised it in 1825. Since 1964 military leaders are controlling the Government.

and education profits only the minority of the country.

The process of the systematic education in many countries of the American continent seems to be the same — the same trend of systematic education they had before. This is what you can see today in the former Portugese colonies. You may say they are realising it and you may say that, after independence, these countries have a new education. No, No, No. It is not possible. They got a new concern because of my work four years ago. They had many difficulties. But now, they are conscious that they must change radically the systematic education and they are trying to do that. They are trying to put together my introduction to the non-formal education instead of developing a kind of elitistic education which characterises the formal education of the colonisers. Angola is trying to do that and along with that Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Mozambique and Sao Tome and Principe. But why? Because at least until now these countries do not have new-colonialist perspective. They are wanting to be themselves with lots of difficulties. I don't know whether they can go very far but that is a different question. Upto now they are trying to do that; trying to continue to be with their people, and they are refusing to be neo-colonised. They are trying to

be themselves and, because of that, education for them cannot be the same education they had before.

I don't know whether I have answered your question, but I was trying to express my concern about your question.

### **Moderator**

I want to ask a question about formal education. I personally feel that in a modern science-technology based society — and India is moving towards that — one can see the real need for formal education. In other words, non-formal or information education will not serve the need by itself. It will serve the need of starting education; it will serve the need of supplementing education — formal education. In other words, all three must work together and complement one another. Certainly you cannot replace formal education. I see the validity of what you are saying: 'formal education will not serve to change the society'. I would agree with that. But, then, how do you see the role of formal education?

### **Paulo**

It depends on those who have power. I did not say that we could escape from formal education. I recognise that education is a demand,

the necessity of the very 'incompleteness' of the human beings. Because of that, you can see education as a necessity. It is one thing. The other thing is that the systematic education has necessarily to change according to the process of society. For example, Angola cannot have the same kind of school which you have in India. It is impossible. When you asked the question, you were interested to know whether I am against formal education. No, No. What I emphasised was that the systematic education expresses the ideology of power of its society. I also agree with you, it is necessary to increase the knowledge of science and technology. I am not against technology. The question also is to know how to use technology and for whom to use it. I am not against technology in itself. We need technology and we need science — and because of that we need systematic education.

## MARXIAN PATTERN AND CASTE SYSTEM

### A Participant

When you came to Bangalore last time, you mentioned that, given the caste-ridden nature of India, you were not sure whether this procedure (conscientisation) will work in India. One problem I come across is to bring the poor

together from different castes in the Marxian pattern. Now let us say that it works out. I see the religious needs of those people to be much deeper, in many cases, than the economic needs. When we are bringing in a methodology like this, what happens to their religious consciousness? Is there going to be a religious vacuum created? If we bring in Christianity into it, it is unfair. So I am making use of a method for our own programme. I have seen in many cases that the untouchables, who are equally suffering, criticise each other on the basis of their position or caste. How do we visualise this in India? That is a way of organising the masses, basing themselves on the religious needs. I feel there is some religious vacuum created there also. Do you have some answer to it?

### **Paulo**

No, I think we cannot under-estimate religion. According to me, it is some dogmatic people who are unable to understand the people. And it is a mistake. I remember, for example, in Brazil, there was a very strong peasant movement. One of the leaders of this was a young man who is an exile in Mexico — Francisco Julia. He was not a Christian, he was also not a member of the Communist Party. But he was a leftist and preponderantly Marxist, but not a

sectarian, not narrow. He used to go to talk to the peasants and they came to talk to him. I repeat, he was not a Christian, but he used to open the gospel to read it. When he finished reading, he asked the peasants, if in their community the boss was doing what God said, what Christ said. They said, 'no, really it is completely different'. Then he said, 'it is also necessary for him to know if the priest ever did according to the Bible'. The answer was in the negative. Only you are with Christ. Then the question for you is to change the situation — you have to change the priest and the boss — with Christ.

Remember that this man did not believe in Christ but did not say, 'you too deny Christ'. He had a very good sociological understanding of the people with whom he was working. He knew that the question for transformation was not to take Christ in the heads and hearts of the people, but transform the reality in order that the people may have a real understanding of Christ. I personally felt that this man was making a very good contribution to the church compared to many of us. Take for instance the role of religion in the case of Iran. The religious leader who was not a politician, did his work for 18 years in exile without compromising, keeping his popular base in the country. Socio-

logically and politically we have to be aware of the role of the religions. This we cannot deny. What we have to do is to denounce the alienating role of religion.

## ADULT EDUCATION

### A Participant

You have already mentioned that you would not comment about the adult education experiment in India. We have a government-sponsored adult education programme, and also adult education programmes are sponsored by voluntary associations. May I know whether they will help in the transformation of society, or only help to domesticate the masses?

### Paulo

It is not difficult to analyse. It depends on the power structure of the society. The adult education programmes are giving a minimum contribution. Let us take now Sao Tome and Principe, the two islands off the coast of Guinea, the population of which is more or less that of one street of Delhi — 75,000 people. It is the government which is leading the programme, and I am giving my minimum contribution. I can tell you that at least until now it is the most beautiful thing I have ever participated in my

life. It is a very liberating programme of adult education — development provided by any government. But why? Because the government coincides with the people. Because the government is not working for the traditional elite of this country. Because the production is not in the hands of a few people against the majority of the people. Without changing that, it is impossible to make humanism. The adult education, the adult literacy programme in Cuba after the revolution, was led by a revolutionary government and it was one of the most fantastic programmes of this century in the field of adult education. In one year, they had finished it. Cuba is the only country which did that in Latin America. Coincidentally, they had made revolution. The very process of education today in Cuba is one of the most important programmes of adult education which was led by the government, the Marxist government, a fantastic programme of education. Compare this with Brazil. Brazil, which is big in size and power, until now continues to have over 40-45 per cent illiterate population.

When people ask me, 'Paulo, do you think it is dangerous that the government leads a programme of education without being neutral'? My answer is, first of all, it is impossible for a programme of education to be neutral. Secondly,

it depends on the nature of the government and with whom the government is leading the programme. When I had this small time to co-ordinate a national programme for adult education, I was invited by the minister of education and the President of the Republic to co-ordinate this programme. It was an official programme. But we oriented the popular education in the direction of the respect of the rights of the people. It was not an alienating programme. Because of that I am still in exile. The question is to know the nature of the government.

## MISSION OF THE CHURCH

### Santiago

A few words about the topic of this afternoon — the prophetic role of the church — and the illustrations made by Paulo about the traditional church, the modernised church and the prophetic church, and so on. I get the feeling that still these three categories probably do not meet the existential or a realistic situation. We do have a really big dilemma. Whether it is a missionary church, modern church or even the prophetic church — even in the way that you had explained — we have to carry on at least one of the very basic missions of the church about which we are taught right from our childhood. That

is ultimately in terms of popular basis, more and more people should become Christians. At least this is accepted by the institutional church and basically by people who are staunchly convinced in their own faith. Each one believes that if one is a Catholic, as many as possible should become Catholics; if one is a Protestant, he will be happy if some of the Catholics become Protestants. I suppose nobody will have any unction in the hearts, (he will be happy) if his faith is also shared by somebody else. I think nobody would be committing a fault. But, somehow or other, in the prophetic role of the church you mentioned, this does not come out. Its basic theological, evangelical, missionary purpose, is one of the very purpose of the existence of the church. When it is dealing with social, economic destiny of the people, it dies at a certain level without fulfilling one of its one basic missions of trying to see that as many as possible come over and get baptised and so on. I don't want the church to die like that. I am having a big difficulty in my understanding on the intellectual level when some of you say that as long as the church does not deal with the social, economic dimensions of the people, rooting (basing) itself with the people as they are, whoever they may be — tribal, non-tribal, Hindu, Muslim, Catholic or Protestant etc. — and deriv-

ing probably that as the priority from what the people ultimately would like to have, we need not put the priority either from, let us say, the Christian angle or the Islamic angle. We hear of formation of Islamic republics coming into being. Fine. One sort of revolution is taking place. But still the word "Islamic" is there.

I feel the prophetic role of any religion, including Christianity, is to function in this world deriving its authority from the people without diluting its very basic purpose of bringing its own good news to others. If you analyse all the institutions which are run by the church, educational institutions, hospitals, other programmes, more often these are not based on the people. Very often our Jesuit friends say, 'I am a Jesuit, so I have to do this', as if the Jesuits have got something more than a Catholic, baptised, confirmed, lay Christian. Personally, I don't think so. And then, among the religious congregations, among the denominations, among the various major religions, it is not ultimately the caste. It is basically the dogmatic religious root which is also the cause of colonialism and missionary approach, and so on. My problem is: is it (evangelism) possible at all in the whole process of liberation? — whether you call it conscientisation or not. Where do we place the role of the prophetic church to bring

at least the basic mission of the church to give good news to the people and in black and white terms — to baptise and convert?

### Paulo

I would like to listen to people here. Nevertheless, I would like to say a few words. First of all, I am convinced of two things — 'the prophetic attitude' and 'being prophet'. This does not mean only to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak. I am convinced that the real process is not only to speak on behalf of those who are silent, because they cannot speak, but try to fight with them in order that they may speak. It is not only a question of saying O.K. There are millions here in this country or in Latin America who are prevented from saying their words. I say the 'word' on behalf of them even though I cannot. For me, the real prophet, besides doing that, fights in order to transform the realities which prevents the silent majority to speak.

Secondly, the prophetism is also historical. That is, the way for you to be a prophet in India is not necessarily the way for a Brazilian to be a prophet somewhere else and vice versa. The ways for Gandhi to be a prophet in his time is not necessarily the same which another Gandhi discovers in another place. Precisely because of

that the historical condition of prophetism becomes real. The prophetic church in Latin America has to express the 'real' aspects of the people at large in oppression in Latin America. Being a prophet today as a Christian in Latin America means not only to speak but to fight with the object of liberating the masses of the oppressed in Latin America. Maybe in the next century there may be other aspects in the historical priorities. But this is, in my point of view, what characterise the historical needs in Latin America. This is why a theologian like Gutierrez is so engaged in this aspect, in this perspective. This is why the process needs scientific analysis. They are not angels, they are not 'gods', they are human beings. If they are, they have some prophetic position to the extent that they are too much engaged in their time. The prophets can foresee precisely because they see very well. Because they see what is going on today very well, they can foresee the next day, which none of us is able to see. I would like to ask some of you to comment on what Santiago said.

### Samuel Rayan

The question raised by Santiago is a deep one: about the understanding of mission as conversion leading to baptism etc. I would like to

point out one or two lines of search in this connection.

One is that the church understands itself as Catholic, as coming from God who created all people according to the first article of the creed. Therefore what He gives to the world as a structure (church) in which something of His concern for the world is expressed, cannot be simply seen as an ethnic reality. Catholic really means universal. The church of Jesus means to be God's people, whereas we understand it in ethnic terms, as if *only those who have undergone a particular ritual and subscribe to certain particular formulae, are people of God. This is an extremely narrow and even dangerous approach.*

If we go to the sources to which we referred — that is, the basic document that record the experience of Christian movement, we find that the church is not an ethnic group but God's people.

If we are honest and give full meaning to the first article of the creed, and believe in God who created, and also in Jesus Christ through and for whom everything was created, then the people of God is in the first place the human race. Therefore we need to have a larger approach to the mission. The mission is not directly a question of imposing or handing over a particular formula or getting people to undergo a particular ritual. Mission, above all, is bringing to

people an ever growing and deepening experience of God's love which they may then encounter bodily in one man — Jesus and in His struggle for people's well being, freedom and future.

Even in the famous 'mission sentence', "Go, make disciples, baptising, teaching", the emphasis is on the main clause "make disciples". What does it mean? We need to look into this more carefully. This is not a formula, a ritual, but something far deeper. Nor is it something ready-made and finished in one day, it is a process of disciple-becoming and this goes on.

You mentioned baptism in particular. There is an ambiguity around this word. In the Acts also baptism is often presented as a particular ritual. But in the gospels there are three important references besides this 'mission' verse. Jesus got baptised in the Jordan, and the situation is, when he stands in line with the people, he undergoes something. There are two more utterances — Luke 12, Matthew 20. There also baptism is referred to as something that one undergoes. The references are actually to his suffering. The struggle that he opted to take for the people. This is the meaning of baptism.

Therefore the baptism which a disciple undergoes is not primarily a sort of ritual, but dedication to the people's cause and liberation

which implies suffering; commitment even to the point of being ready to lay down the life. This is the baptism to which the disciples are called. At the third clause in that statement, i.e. teaching them to do all the things, is ultimately reduced to and underlined as real, intelligent, concrete, historical love for people. All his teachings point down to that, — full commitment for the people. In that sense, the prophetic mission of the church and the evangelising mission of the church have not only come close to each other but begin to coincide.

And I will conclude by saying that Jesus described his own mission (as a narrative stands) at the beginning of his ministry at Nazareth where he gave his manifesto, as a mission to liberate, and to fight against whatever dehumanises or diminishes people so that they may be free, and have life.

### **Joseph Velamkunnel**

The concept of the mission has gone through a lot of changes. Now the Pope has expanded the concept of mission, using the word 'evangelisation'. It is used in wider perspective in which he includes also social transformation, structural changes and all sorts of things. I think the official teaching has brought in a new element.

### **Pradip Prabhu**

I think the missionary approach of the church today is a great contradiction to the concept of conscientisation. Because the way we go about is, 'you must change the direction as a set of proofs that is given'. And in that, dogma of its very nature domesticates. You never critically question it. There is a big doubt in my mind as to whether, in the present context of the way the missionary work is done, the things would ever agree. The second question that comes up is, does a 'dhobi' mark (washer-man's mark) make a Christian? That is a contradiction to the concept of being a Christian. Christianity has always expressed the sign of commitment towards the people.

### **Samuel Rayan**

I think that intellectual assent to a set of truths and formulations was a definition of faith given in a particular situation in the last century to meet a particular opinion of the time. It was never meant as an adequate description of faith. We have gone far beyond it. Faith is a commitment to love people whom God loves. This has come to us, according to Christians, in Jesus Christ. It is this commitment that constitutes the faith.

Socondly, the dogmas themselves, if we are honest about the matter, are sort of formulations evolving from time to time through a complex process, but always deriving from the people and their experience; often from their meditations, their prayers, their practices etc. They are not something made in a university faculty and imposed on the people, but made from the life and perceptions of the people themselves. But since they are often couched in an academic jargon, an impression has been created that they are made by some officials somewhere and then handed down to people. Really it did not happen that way. Thus, the way that missions are practised today will surely need very deep modifications and re-thinking because many of the missions have also come with the colonial church, within the colonial context. And in that context, it has also participated, in some measure, in the ideology and the manners of the colonial system. We need to liberate ourselves from this tradition.

## EDUCATION AND POLITICS

### Moderator

Let me tell you an incident when Paulo met our Prime Minister a few days ago. Talking to him, the context came up where he mentioned

that education cannot be neutral, and that it has to be political. Of course, Morarji, who knows for certain, said, "It is not true, Paulo" (laughter), and when Paulo added that it is a cultural annexation of the mind, Morarji said, "I am much older than you are, Paulo. So you better listen to me." So Paulo answered by saying, "I don't agree with you at all."

I wonder whether we would be interested in this question. I mean, he touched on the political nature of education, the role of education, particularly with reference to its politicisation; the necessary connection between politics and education. Would you like to comment on that question, please, Paulo?

### **Paulo**

I have the impression that some of the things which are told this morning and afternoon here have touched this problem. Of course when we say that education is a political activity, we are not necessarily saying that education has to do with this or that political party. We are only saying that the nature of the process in political, no matter whether the educators are conscious of this or not — no matter where we are working with education: primary, secondary or university education levels.

Secondly, education is also an act of know-

ing. Is it possible to escape this? It means that in every educational situation, we always have the subjects to know. We are engaged in the process of knowing something. We have an object to be known. If I teach sociology, I come in the room and meet the students; I put on the table the object of the seminar — what I am doing. I am begining a process of knowing, or getting knowledge, in which I am one of the subjects, on the one hand, looking for knowledge, and on the other, the students also have subjects to know. The object to be known is precisely the content of our seminar. Adult literacy is an act of knowing, and precisely because of this, it is also political. The act of knowing is a political act.

I think that many people feel that I have a fixed idea. No, I don't have that. I only recognise that. I think that we can discover the political nature of the act of knowing. It is difficult for us even to perceive the political nature because of the strong-gripped traditions in which we hear certain ideologies. It reveals certain ideologies. But when we ask, for example, about the act of knowing, the question is, "is it possible to know?" We have to ask, for example, "what to know", and then we ask about the objective to be known. But suddenly we think that we need to ask more questions and

then we ask, "to know for what?" If I know something, this is because I am knowing against something. I recognise something because of its properties. Then I have to know for whom I am knowing and against whom I am knowing. Is there possibility of the exercise of neutral experience of knowing?

This last question leads us to the political nature of the act of knowing. Because of this, I used to say we do not have the theory of knowledge. Then education, which is also an act of knowing, has its nature as a political one. It has to do with the formation or deformation of the human beings. It is absolutely associated, dependently, to those who are in power; — it is another thing which you cannot deny. For me, what is important is to know what is the nature of the state or society in order for me to understand what is the nature of adult education, and not the opposite. I know nothing. And what is important to know is to achieve the effect of it being a political act.

For example, the liberating education — which is in opposition to the domesticating one — does not mean that it must be a manipulative education. It is something which many people teach people — rejecting the statement that education is political, because immediately they think that it means education must be mani-

pulative. For me, the domesticating education is really manipulative. Liberating education should not be manipulative. Nevertheless, many times we help to manipulate even though we think that we are trying to liberate. This morning, some of you said that you did not like very much certain dichotomies which I give here concerning this kind of education, I accept your criticism and I think when I write another book, I will be more precise, more clear. I think I did dichotomise. Of course in certain moments you can find certain mixture — manipulation and liberation in the same process. I think it was not so black and white, as I thought, in the book. Nevertheless it is good to provoke. I understand your criticism.

How is it possible for us to deny that the education which the people are having today in South America is not a political one? No, No. Even if you ask the President, for example, "are you giving here a political education?" or if you ask him, "do you have some seminar on political education?", he would say, "No, no, we don't have seminars about political education, education is political." Even the primary school education is political. He says constantly that. But what he does not say is that it is manipulation. If he knows, he does not admit that — his ministers also.

The other day I asked the young people who were discussing with me the question: 'whether the teaching of arithmetic is neutral?' For example, an exercise in calculation of arithmetic in which they say, 'if you have \$1000 and if you go to the bank (the real address of the real bank is written) and make a deposit with the interest of say four percent, in six months how much would you get?' This is a calculation. I asked why this example in the teaching of arithmetic? Is it a capitalistic exercise or not? Is there not a capitalist ideology in this exercise? The society in which this exercise is given is a capitalist society. We cannot expect any other kind of orientation. But what makes me angry sometimes is that people do not even think of such exercise. The same people would say that education in Cuba is a manipulative education. Because in the exercise, instead of the suggestions for the students to go to the bank, the book would say, for example, 'if you worked collectively on a farm with 100 comrades, and you could produce in six months a certain quantity of produce...' then the same people would say, look, look, look, the domestication, look, the ideologies, look, the politics. But why not the politics, the ideology as the adjectives for the poor? Why don't you see this? I am different. I prefer to say that we cannot escape from that

disease known as education — in Switzerland, Germany, India or Cuba. It has to go. And if you seek to have an 'angelic' system of education, please go to paradise in the Greek history. Because in actual history, I don't think you can find that.

### **Moderator**

We had decided to stop at 4.30 p.m. and I think we should stop now.

One of the things which Paulo likes to say is that the object of education is not merely to learn how to read and write words but to read and write reality. This is the first phase, and then go on to the second phase, which is more important, to learn to re-write reality. I think an interaction began today, here; we could learn to write and re-write reality in the way we function in the world. This has been an extremely useful day for all of us.

### **George Mathew**

Friends, it has been a great joy for all of us who are connected with this movement here to have had you all with us. As Fr. Kunnunkal has said, this was a very useful time to discuss with, to understand and also to listen to, one of the great thinkers of our time. From morning till now — it was not an easy day — we had to

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think, we had to listen, we had to strain, and a tremendous amount of concentration was demanded of all of us. I hope this struggle will continue in our practice also when we leave this fine premises of Vishwa Yuvak Kendra. This is a beginning and I hope we will have more opportunities in future to come together and interact, and again to get more ideas. We are all grateful to Paulo for sparing this whole day for us. We have benefitted richly. We are grateful to Fr. Kunnunkal for moderating the procedure, crystallising the thoughts and directing our deliberations, to Mr. Kuriakose, a friend of this group here, for making it possible to have a day with Paulo; and I thank all of you for coming and attending this from far and near. Thank you very much.

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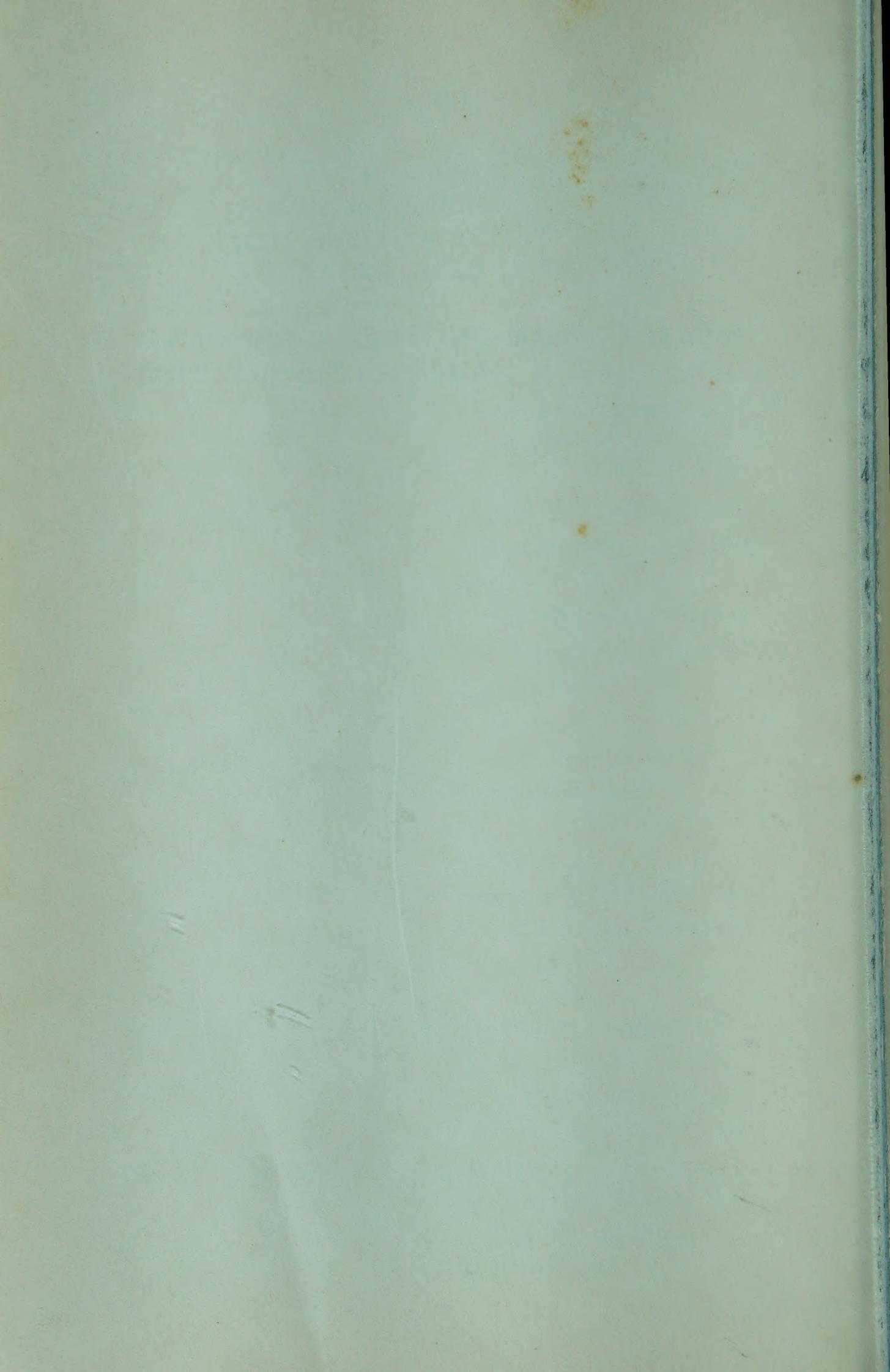
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*(Continued from cover page II)*

élites wishing to guard their own political, economic and social control, by developers wishing to guard their own interests. Domestication is the practice of oppression.

Education as a practice of liberation assumes men as subjects, actors, "beings" as opposed to "things". Cultural action poses the world as a problem: the learners (both students and teachers) are invited to stand away from their situation and observe it, to become conscious of its themes, to put questions to it. This involves a confrontation with reality, a penetration of its myths and slogans. The learners perceive their limit-situations and their tasks. In the process of dealing with their reality, the learners become conscious of their oppression.

## **ABOUT THIS BOOK**

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The pages of this book contain what transpired at a discussion with Paulo. Issues were raised; questions were asked. These reflected the aspirations and frustrations of the participants. The words said in the meeting have a certain force because they are expressions of experiences of persons engaged at the grassroot level in making people conscious of their rights.



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